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SCRUTINY

A Quarterly Review

Edited by

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F. R. LEAVIS DENYS THOMPSON

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THE MODERN UNIVERSITIES

POSTSCRIPT

THE article that appeared under this head in the last number of *Scrutiny* was mainly concerned with the obstacles in the way of any satisfactory programme of education at the modern universities. As an attempt to get the main problems recognized and to secure a basis for discussion it was necessarily critical in the common limited sense. Constructive criticism, it was pointed out, could only be the result of co-operation, and correspondence was invited to that end.

Such correspondence as there has been so far confirms the case that was presented: that at most of the modern universities it is the machinery of education which determines the kind of education given; that the essential questions—what are we educating for? what constitutes the function of a university to-day?—are lost sight of in the carrying out of a routine; that lectures (to come to specific symptoms) are governed by examination requirements, and that the number of lectures and the number of examinations are alike excessive. It may fairly be regarded as established that no satisfactory means have yet been found of overcoming the difficulties inherent in the position of the modern universities—difficulties such as the lack of any real centrality—which distinguish them from the older foundations.

Two of the letters received suggest that some repetition and underlining is called for. Correspondent A remarked that the present shortcomings of schools, universities and teachers' training departments form a single problem. Examination-crammed pupils, he said, enter the university simply to escape from badly paid drudgery in an office; a teachers' training grant temporarily solves their problems. The university merely continues the kind of examination routine they are familiar with at school and, still inert and without any lively conception of education, they pass through the training departments back to the schools where they instruct others to follow in their steps and pass examinations. Universities (particularly the 'modern' ones) are thus 'scholastic factories' and

university education nothing but ' a means of escaping the conflict with a chaotic world.' Correspondent B was more concerned with the effect on the pupil of any attempt to alter the customary routine:

> ' It can escape no effective teacher who makes some personal contact with his students that in so far as he has succeeded in changing the boy or girl who came from the Higher Certificate class at school, he has done something to unfit the resulting man or woman for the life they are most certainly going to lead. If he has ' trained taste ' even a little, the effect will be to disgust the wage-earning graduate with his economically-necessary conditions: the teacher in an elementary school (where many go), for example, will only be irked at the sort of material that he has to teach, will find colleagues philistine or insipid, and will be thrown back on himself as a solitary and unhappy individual . . . Pending the arrival of a reformed world, he might (I fear) have been better off had he kept to the mediocre requirements of a mechanical memorizing and reproducing of opinion, rather than have let himself be beguiled into belief in the value of culture.'

Now this second letter is, if we may say so, very much beside the point. There is no doubt that a good many people who have been awakened at the university to a perception of finer values find the milieu in which they have to earn their living extremely uncongenial. But this is no reason at all why the university teacher should *not* attempt to make his pupils less at home in their world. As Denys Thompson has pointed out in these pages[1] the aim of education to-day must be to turn out ' misfits ' rather than spare parts. It is precisely by unfitting his pupils for the environment—the modern environment being what it is—that the educator can hope to change it, and to change it more radically than if he concentrates on ' political ' issues only. As for the vicious circle commented on by the first correspondent, we can appropriately, if not modestly, quote from the article ' Will Training Colleges Bear Scrutiny?' which we published in December, 1932:

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[1]See ' Advertising God,' December, 1932, and ' What Shall We Teach?' March, 1934.

> ' Obviously to break it at one point [the same vicious circle was in question] would be an inadequate aim. But we must begin somewhere. And we intend, in subsequent numbers of *Scrutiny*, to attack at other points: an inquiry into the examination system is already in progress . . . Moreover *Scrutiny*, as we hardly need to remind our readers, directs itself in the exercise of its general function upon the cultural conditions that make the educational scandal possible.'

The ' Scrutiny of Examinations,' an article on ' Why Universities?' and various articles on general and particular aspects of education have, since that was written, appeared.

The purpose of referring to these articles is not simply to advertise a good cause. The two correspondents who have been quoted are not the only ones who think it necessary to remind us that the problems raised concerning the modern universities are intimately connected with very much wider problems, and that the discussion of *any* aspect of contemporary education involves the discussion of the whole educational system, and the characteristics of contemporary civilization. *Scrutiny's* achievement so far, including the articles directed to specific issues named above, is sufficient proof that we are fully aware of this ; we thought we had ourselves made the point with monotonous insistence, and certainly our educational programme has been conceived from the first in terms of a radical criticism of existing society, including, we may say, its economic and social ordering. What we have also insisted is that the scope and intricacy of the major problems—educational and other—should not prevent us from taking every opportunity that offers itself here and now or from urging specific and limited reforms, such as, in the case of the modern universities, the abolition of terminal examinations and a reduction in the number of mass-production lectures. How far the time and energy thus liberated might be used in the interests of essential education is a subject which will be returned to. Co-operation, we may repeat, will be welcomed, for it is plain that if the part of the modern universities in the modern world is not to be confined to supplying the needs of industry their problems must be threshed out in detail, and (this also was insisted) threshed out in relation to a coherent ideal of education for living.

L. C. KNIGHTS.

'CYMBELINE'

' no bolts for the dead '—Posthumus.

IN some respects, one must admit, *Cymbeline* is a very neat bit of work. And the insolence of such a casual remark may possibly find its justification, for some, in the almost comic efficiency with which 'matters are cleared up' in most productions of this play, where the last scene runs off with the clockwork efficiency of a police-court, presided over by an appropriately passive, magisterial Cymbeline. And having seen such a production it is easy to talk glibly of Shakespeare's 'failing vitality' of his successful, or unsuccessful—for that seems to depend on the accidents of the day's business, or the drinks in the intervals—attempt to write a romance, a remarkable play of the month.

But if the play is read carefully—and a great number of people confess to a single, hurried reading—these productions and pseudo-critical ' explanations ' fail to satisfy. Even the most obtuse reader would fail to account for a great deal in the play judging by the accepted standards. It might be suggested that Shakespeare found that the lightheartedly chosen material proved to have an essential interest for him when he was already engaged in the writing. But the play offers such strong resemblances to other plays, notably *The Winter's Tale* (which has an almost identical plot), that one is forced to the conclusion that not only was the plot seriously and deliberately chosen, but it was chosen because of its possibilities as the medium for exploring and refining material which had already an essential interest for the poet. It should be considered, not as a fashionable romance, but as a play which continues the achievement of the great tragedies in another form, in one which defies an arbitrary classification much as *Measure for Measure* does.

In examining the implications of these necessarily vague statements, it is obvious that a start must be made in examining the texture of the verse itself. (Just how obvious that is may be judged from the fashionable attitudes to the play, which in order to leave it as a kind of superior best-seller have to forget, conveniently enough, the major part of the verse which forms this play).

With certain obvious exceptions—and it is these which have been persistently admired as characteristic of the play—the verse has a hard, corrugated texture differing from that of, say, *Coriolanus* or *The Winter's Tale*, in that this harshness proceeds from the persistent recreation of feelings of a particular kind of physical pain. A large number of the images involve ideas of muscular tension and strain:

> . . . crush him together rather than unfold
> His measure duly . . .
>
> . . . And I shall here abide the hourly shot
> Of angry eyes . . .
>
> I would have broke my eyestrings, cracked them, but
> To look upon him, till the diminution
> Of space had pointed him sharp as my needle.
>
> . . . rivetted, screw'd to my memory.

There is an insistent feeling of brutal strain; the contours of the verse in which these images occur suggest a strong compression —words are strained together to such an extent in this 'fierce abridgment,' that frequently they telescope. 'Underpeep,' 'nothing-gift,' 'after-eye' readily suggest themselves as examples of this tendency. The corollary of this is a tendency of the words to *separate*. Here there is no suggestion of the fluid sap-creation of the great tragedies; the words seem more sharply defined, more separate, the rhythm is, as it were, more fearful, delicately hesitant even. So the life in the verse proceeds from the tension between this tendency and the strong compressive force exerted, as it were, from the outside. Obviously, technique of this kind, in its development away from the characteristic *fusion* of the earlier verse, does not represent an approximation to the verse of the lesser dramatists, the Beaumont and Fletchers writing 'superior' romances. Rather, one suggests, the tendency is towards a kind of verse somewhat like that achieved by Jonson in his best work. In such images as

> that tub
> Both filled and running

the vigorous, destructive vivacity of the homely metaphor completely refutes the charges implied in the academic attitudes towards this play.

The reference to Jonson once made, the suggestion of a subtle exaggeration which pervades this play gains in significance. At once it is seen to be intimately connected with the sense of strain we have noticed. Consider the following passage, selected almost at random:

> Had I this cheek
> To bathe my lips upon ; this hand, whose touch,
> Whose every touch, would force the feeling soul
> To the oath of loyalty ; this object, which
> Takes prisoner the wild motion of my eye,
> Fixing it only here ;—should I—damned then—
> Slaver with lips as common as the stairs
> That mount the Capitol ; join gripes with hands
> Made hard with hourly falsehood—falsehood, as
> With labour ; then, by peeping in an eye
> Base and illustrious as the smoky light
> That's fed with stinking tallow ;—it were fit
> That all the plagues of hell should at one time
> Encounter such revolt.

The exaggeration is obvious. The gusto of the dramatic gestures and inflated emotions—one remembers that Iachimo is playing a part—with the head thrown back and the arm upraised in

> Should I—damned then—

and the raised voice sweeping out into the next lines in an exaggerated theatricality—all this is superbly realized, and naturally it draws attention to itself, demanding a more critical attention. The exaggeration is 'placed' by a continual reference to a solid matter-of-factness. The inflation, built up on 'bathe' and the general theatricality, is subtly controlled by such images as that in the seventh and eighth lines ; the heightened disgust of the kissing, with its suggestions of servility, of old men and children dribbling on chins, and of the dirty hard steps of a public building trodden by unwashed crowds, is modified by the very concreteness of the image, by the *pettiness* of the suggestions. Moreover

' Capitol ' still has some dignity, and the lips could only sustain such comparison where the attention is focussed not so much in the propriety of the image as such, as in its reference to the general context, to the unreal theatrical world which yet exists only in concrete, real particulars. This air of unreality, this inflation, reaches bursting-point as it extends into the concentrated disgust of the ' stinking tallow,' and here it becomes obvious that the disgust envelopes the familiar work-a-day world, that both worlds, the unreal melodramatic one and the solid here-and-now, mutually interact in an unresolved tension ; or, if you like, while there is a need to escape the disgusting sordidness of the familiar, so that even disgust is exaggerated, yet on the other hand there is a vital need to remain in close contact with the ' local ' life.

Put crudely there is a ' conflict ' between the tendencies to escape and to remain and the resultant poise is intensely critical. What we have to examine are the bases and implications of these tendencies, so surely expressed in the verse, and the means by which the balance between them is preserved.

II.

The critical interaction of a contrasting dualism which has been noted in the foregoing section is typical of the whole play ; throughout there is no ' positive ' which is not modified by the intense irony, not even an assured, transcendent vision of Evil or Death, as in the great tragedies ; nor is there on the other hand sufficient energy in the negative emotions themselves which might in itself constitute a ' positive.' The acute disgust which finds expression in such phrases as ' partnered with tomboys ' ' vaulting variable ramps ' and ' crackt of kitchen trulls,' is itself so conditioned, critically, that it too is made to appear petty. This critical element is not, however, merely the ironic detachment of the sophisticated sensibility pricking extravagant bubbles ; it is too fierce, too extravagant itself for just that. It seems to emerge at the point of tension between the violent negative emotions which envelop *all* experience and the need to create some positive. In this tension feelings are exaggerated into a condition of nervous susceptibility, and ' exposedness,' which is tauter than that of *The Winter's Tale* where the critical element, in this special sense, being absent, there is a more resolved, if also more convulsive,

reaction. Comparison with this latter play shows how different the disgust-feelings are in these two plays. In the verse of their speeches one immediately notices the greater violence of Leontes' disgust (' no barricado for a belly ') the more convulsive movement, as if the disgust, almost hatred, has a definite direction, whereas Posthumus is not sure, he is swayed between the recognition of the appearance of virtue and of the lust beneath.

> my mother seemed
> The Dian of that time: so doth my wife
> The non-pareil of this.

The emotions behind Leontes are more direct—or, as Coleridge put it, there is ' something like hatred ' ; those behind Posthumus are ironically conceived:

> I'll write against them,
> Detest them, curse them.

It is hopelessly inadequate after the violent theatricality of his disgust-motions. The disgust itself is restrained, held up as it were by the taut critical irony, which when relaxed as in the later play, allows the negative emotions a looser, more violent expression. But when both are compared with Othello's speeches a wide difference is observed. With him it is a purely personal matter—in one speech he even seeks reasons for her unfaithfulness. There is no disgust, no violent hatred against all women, but only the self-conscious reference of everything to his own feelings and then, the self-dramatization. There is hardly any of this self-dramatization in *The Winter's Tale* but in *Cymbeline* it persists throughout, both in the theatricality of the emotions expressed and the trick of making the individual characters play parts, consciously or unconsciously. In this play this ironic detachment is partly *protective*—I mean that what in *Othello* was, shall we say, a tragic theme, becomes in *Cymbeline* a means of distancing the emotions, of protecting the creative sensibility from experience too painful. The artist refuses to give universal valency to these negative emotions though he must recognize their potency. Notice how the third ' O ' is introduced in the following passage:

> O vengeance, vengeance!
> Me of my lawful pleasure she restrained,

> And prayed me oft forbearance: did it with
> A pudency so rosy, the sweet view on't
> Might well have warmed old Saturn ; that I thought her
> As chaste as unsunned snow:—O all the devils!—
> This yellow Iachimo, in an hour—wast not?—
> Or less—at first?—perchance he spoke not, but,
> Like a full acorned boar, a German one,
> Cried 'O' and mounted.

The dominant note in the first lines is a kind of angry sensuality, which is somewhat like that characteristic of Othello—later there is the same 'association of strong sensuality with ugly vindictive jealousy' which Mr. Leavis notes in the earlier play.[1] But the stress has been shifted in the later play—a different element is introduced. Posthumus, in his frenzied excitement, lets his imagination get to work and seems to enjoy the spectacle, elaborating for his own benefit the nationality of the boar, until one is brought to that

> Cried 'O' and mounted

—the climax of a fine declamation ; an anti-climax rather, for one's earlier suspicions are confirmed in that comic detail. That is the element of differentiation from *Othello*. It is almost a kind of understatement placed immediately after a blustering speech, again as in

> I'll write against them . . .

But it is not just comic, never falls into bathos. Beneath the words can be felt the strong disgust reaction from the heavy oppressive sluggishness ('German boar') of the gross, common life, from all that does not realize a particular, egotistic (the persistent irony is operative here) and completely *selfish* ideal—but the general impression is that it's overdone: the convulsive movement of the description here is completely out of accord with the intensely static quality of the actual bedroom scene. Not only are the negative emotions inflated, but also there is a recognition of the 'impossibility' of the ideal, upon which they depend, in

[1] *Scrutiny*, Vol. VI, No. 3.

the description of Imogen's chastity. She is so extraordinarily chaste.

It is absurd to suggest, as many, including Mr. Murry,[1] have done, that Imogen is conceived in the same terms as Marina and Perdita. In the first place, a large proportion of the images of muscular tension occur in her speeches, and in general the verse of these is hard, vigorous and uncompromising. With Perdita's speeches compare the following:

> False to his bed! What is it to be false?
> To lie in watch there, and to think on him?
> To weep twixt clock and clock? if sleep charge nature
> To break it with a fearful dream of him,
> And cry myself awake! That's false to's bed, it is?
> I false! Thy conscience witness, Iachimo,
> Thou didst accuse him of incontinency;
> Thou them lookedst like a villain: now, methinks,
> Thy favour's good enough. Some jay of Italy,
> Whose mother was her painting, hath betrayed him:
> Poor I am stale, a garment out of fashion:
> And for I am richer than to hang by the walls,
> I must be ript—to pieces with me!

The harsh bitterness of this verse, crystallizing into such phrases as ' to weep 'twixt clock and clock ' where the harsh separateness of the words, like strokes on an anvil, creates a feeling of taut suspense, is quite unlike the buoyant wave-movement of Perdita's speech, which should, rather, be related to the verse of the dirges. The taut suspension allows the concentrated disgust (' some jay of Italy ') a closer, more controlled, expression and prepares the way for the dramatic gesture in ' I must be ript.' At that point, the melodramatic savageness reveals itself—the gesture recalls the ' acting ' of Posthumus, and points to the inflated tone, the exaggerated incongruity in the juxtaposition of the ideas of dusty

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[1] ' Shakespeare and Love,' *Countries of the Mind*. ' . . . something ethereal is added to the love of the earlier comedies and something earthly taken away. The light is no longer golden but silver. Lovers are no more witty together ; they are almost enfolded in a dream of tenderness.'

moth-eaten garments hanging outmoded on walls which can accomodate suicidal hangings, and her great chastity. The same process can be observed in the speech of Posthumus examined above. Imogen is dramatizing herself and, shall we say, ' enjoys ' the dramatic gesture. Not that it is pure farce or melodrama—the ready comic or pathetic responses (the easiest ways out of the situation) are prohibited by the extreme concreteness of the imagery and by the subtle deflation, the hint at the ' impossibility ' of her protestations. One is reminded of Act II, Sc. ii.

Imogen : What hour is it?

Lady : Almost midnight, madam.

Imogen : I have read three hours, then: mine eyes are weak:
Fold down the leaf where I have left: to bed:
Take not away the taper, leave it burning ;
And if thou canst awake by four o'the clock,
I prithee, call me. Sleep hath seized me wholly.

You can see here how Hazlitt was tempted into one of his penny press remarks: ' They (the heroines of these later plays) were the prettiest little set of martyrs and confessors on record! ' Although such a remark is grossly insensitive and commits the common mistake of grouping together ' heroines ' who after all belong to different plays, yet it is evident that Imogen is extraordinarily virtuous—too virtuous, too beautiful, too much ' the paragon of all excellence,' and to this excess the continual inflation in the verse brings the ironic inflection. Against this air of impossibility, however, there is the practical homely familiarity of her speeches. It is as if there is a need to create an ideal, chaste beauty (somewhat like Marina) and yet there is too the insistent necessity of conceiving her in terms of that local world in which she is and does as other women, and which has so much that disgusts, so much that attracts. (It is the central problem for the artist in creating the play, for the artist in ' living ' the play). The exaggeration is not entirely farcical, is not primarily so. Primarily it is due to the need to make Imogen remote from the commonplace ; but the insistent knowledge of the existence of the commonplace and its reality adds the note of comic unreality. Keats, in a letter to Miss Reynolds, said

> 'Imprimis: I sincerely believe that Imogen is the finest Creature; and that I should have been disappointed at hearing you prefer Juliet; Item, yet I feel such a yearning towards Juliet, that I would rather follow her into Pandemonium than Imogen into Paradise.'

That sort of casual remark points to this quality of remoteness, of extravagant virtue. She is conceived as existing in a world apart and yet living in the local routine of homely images, and I suggest that this seeming impossibility is the cause of the strained tone of the play, of Posthumus' jealousy.

This tension contrasts with the 'fiery vision' of the great tragedies (and it is to these that *Cymbeline* should be related, not the early comedies) where, say, Cleopatra is created *through* the details of common life, the vision transcends them, whereas Imogen is conceived almost *in spite of* them. It is interesting to notice how the symbol of Cleopatra is introduced into the 'report' of Iachimo, where it contrasts with the insolent dirtiness of the pornographic raconteur, which reduces everything to its own level—the insinuating hiss of the alliteration and the familiar tone do not allow any transcendent attitudes towards love, yet the meanness of the account is betrayed in the symbol. The evocation of such a love reveals the coarse self-centredness of Posthumus' agreement:

> She hath been colted by him.

It is as if Posthumus had been thinking pruriently of Imogen when Iachimo was speaking—as if that is the only way of reducing her impossible chastity to everyday experience.

In Posthumus' admission of his guilt all these previous suggestions of melodramatic inflation and self-centred dramatization which we have examined are focussed and intensified, for he rants and struts and visualizes himself, quite conceitedly, as a monster. Here, again, although the air of savage farce is strong in the exaggerated theatricality, there is a suggestion of a firm need beneath it. The 'recognition,' in which the Evil is known and overcome, is conceived as necessary at the same time as a detached, painfully critical attitude is preserved. This 'recognition' is essential before the idea of 'rebirth'—quite as important here as in *The Winter's Tale*—can be accepted. This idea is integral to our conception of the play and now, having examined the kind

of emotions broadly designated here as negative, it remains to examine the more positive tendencies and their final reconciliation, and it is in this examination that the idea of ' rebirth ' assumes its importance.

III.

In beginning this fresh inquiry I suggest that we can extend our previous generalization—that there is a conflict between the need to escape and the need to remain in the familiar routine of everyday life—into another, that the contrast throughout is between the still movelessness of the ideal vision and the crude, gross violence of the familiar. The whole play does seem in fact a gradual probing and sifting of experience to create a precise definition of this ' ideal vision ' and to reconcile it with actual living experience.

Thus throughout the play there is a complex comparison between Britain and Rome. We have seen how there is a strong revulsion from the pettiness and sordidness of ' local ' life, but there is much more than that. Britain is regarded with a mature reasonableness—I do not imply that any ' statements ' are made in any particular speeches.

> I' the world's volume
> Our Britain seems as of it, but not in't ;
> In a great pool a swan's nest . . .

There, in that final image, you see the balanced recognition of the smallness of Britain. Against any attachment to the native land there is the recognition that Ludstown is incurably provincial, when considered with Rome, which suggests the wide culture of a fine civilization. This contrast is an essential pivot of the play and is characteristic of the ' total situation.' Immediately one notices that Rome is not Italy. Iachimo, ' the Italian villain ' is never called Roman, whereas Lucius, the virtuous soldier of a dignified Empire, is always ' the Roman Lucius.' Rome does not seem to be *spatially visualized*, but, rather, is the nebulous symbol of an escape into the Dignity and Grandeur That Was Rome. And then, of course, there is Italy ; and the relation resolves itself into a contrast between the fine civilization of a remote Golden Age and the vicious evil of a known present, and in this contrast,

since both are ostensibly conceived as contemporaneous (thus employing a device similar to that of ' double time ') both suffer an ironically critical scrutiny.

If the speech of the Queen on the subject of Britain (Act III, Sc. i) be examined it will readily be seen how Cæsar is brought down to the level of a provincial general. He is introduced in colloquial terms as any parish-hero (' a kind of conquest,' ' brag,' etc.) and so naturally becomes ' master Cæsar.' This last phrase is typical (compare ' Neptune's park ') and exhibits a kind of activity essentially similar to that found by Mr. Speir's in ' gospel kail ' and ' Eden's bonny yard ' in Burns.[1] The local does not succeed in annexing, nor is it annexed by, the wider world of Imperial Cæsar ; the two remain suspended. If Cæsar is made provincial then that in itself implies an inferiority in the provinciality, so that in that sense Cæsar preserves his dignity over the incipiently comic Britons strutting in their rustic capital. Rome does remain an avenue of escape, essentially that, from the *close confinement* of the rural life, its sluggishness and waste. But although its value is admitted it is never regarded as a ' solution '—as we have seen Rome is never regarded as being attainable in space: its attraction lies in its *remoteness*, and this is recognized.

Escape from, and criticism of, the rural life—which seems to include all life though there is the familiar Court-Country opposition—finds expression too in another mode, in the exquisite, pastoral elegizing of the dirges ; but that this ' escape ' is not at all like the ' Shakespearean simplicity ' of Collins or the ' week-ending ' of Arnold is revealed by considering the dirges themselves, undivorced from their context. Mr. Murry has declared:[2] ' In *Cymbeline* Shakespeare himself was not far removed from that condition of relaxed control ; but concentration was too deep an instinct with him ever to be quite forgotten,' and if the dirges are considered by themselves such an account as Mr. Murry gives does seem justified. But considered in their context—and since they are part of the play surely they are entitled to such consideration—the final account must take cognisance of the element of critical irony. It is not just that there is never any chance of

[1] *Determinations*, Essay on Burns.

[2] ' The Poetry of William Collins ' in *Countries of the Mind*.

the emotional impulse ' trickling away through the porous vessel of poetic commonplace,' as Mr. Murry puts it, but that there is a conscious, unrelaxed *critical* force behind it. The first dirge, ' With fairest flowers . . . ' despite the soft fluency (' azure harebell,' ' furred moss,' etc.) has a suggestion of strength, of rustic vigour, noticeably in the word ' ruddock ' ; under the delicate alliterative lilting (' those rich-left heirs that let their fathers lie ') you can feel the tense concentration, the wiriness of the lines. Immediately afterwards the critical attention is focussed in Guiderius' reaction.

> Prithee have done:
> And do not play in wench-like words with that
> Which is so serious.

Not that that is the ' right ' reaction ; the dirges cannot be dismissed so easily—and if one returns to the beginning of this passage a speech by Belarius gives the clue:

> O melancholy!
> Who ever yet could sound thy bottom, find
> The ooze, to show what coast thy sluggish crare
> Might easiliest harbour in?

The thick viscosity of these lines, with its fine image of the ' crare ' heavily yet gracefully (' easiliest harbour in ') moving through the ooze, has certain obvious relations to the claustrophobic tension observed previously. The melancholy is unpleasant yet relaxing, but, as the scene proceeds, the heavy sluggishness is sublimated into the clearer fluency of the dirge and then, completely, in the exquisite song (where the ' chimneysweepers ' introduce a fine black contrast to the golden youth), as if melancholy is directly displayed and then ' worked on,' the process occurring partly under the compulsion of a need to escape, partly under the direction of a strong critical irony—

> Thersites' body is as good as Ajax'
> When neither are alive.

The dirges, then, offer a relief similar to that achieved in the evocation of the wide classic culture of Rome, and, similarly, such

relief is critically 'placed.' There is no simple acceptance or rejection but a critical suspension of allegiance. The common denominator is the remoteness, the stillness—there is a kind of photographic stillness in the precision of the dirges—and if this be accepted it will readily be seen that in this way they are intimately connected with the idea of 'rebirth' which in itself includes the idea of coming to rest, perhaps, in the stillness of death. After the personality in its outward 'seeming' has been abandoned—and here the disguise convention is used to good effect—each character accepts death. Imogen is mourned as dead—indeed she suffers a kind of death—and Posthumus makes his acceptance in the gaol. It is this idea which must be examined now.

In his speech in the goal one immediately notices the lack of any of the inflation of the rest of the play, and of any ironic overtones—there is a great deal of irony in the scene, but it is cut off from the magnificent speech: that is left unaffected. This speech is no instance of the weakened Shakespeare momentarily rousing himself from his mechanical task, or any other such academic myth. It has a measured dignity, a calm reasonableness quite unlike the violent convulsiveness and 'theatricality' of the earlier speeches. The movement gradually becomes slower and finally comes to rest in the last lines—

> If you will take this audit, take this life,
> And cancel these cold bonds. O Imogen!
> I'll speak to thee in silence.

The 'silence,' the static remoteness of death, is what appeals to Posthumus, to the poet, as the solution of the impossible tension between the motions from and towards common experience, and through this the scene leads naturally into the ballet-like movements of the dream,[1] which itself provides the transition into the terrible 'humour' of the prose. After the heightened, spiritual acceptance of death a fine modulation is made through the tense jesting to the normal everyday attitudes of the gaoler's prose, and it is thus that a reconciliation of the two opposite tendencies is made. The keen sense of futility expressed in the magnificent prose—

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[1]See Note at end of this essay.

> ' What an infinite mock is this, that a man should have the best use of eyes to see the way of blindness! I'm sure hanging's the way of winking '—

is maintained as the more practical version of what Posthumus saw more spiritually, and the irony in the gaoler's remarks does not destroy the value of the acceptance nor call it in question at all, rather does it substantiate that, since its energy is directed against the defeatist acceptance of death as an escape from a life of futility.

Here is no passion in accepting death as in the earlier work ; here, death is no bridal bed but the cessation of all movement, is ' silence,' is a negative, cancelling force, which, paradoxically enough, has a kind of positive value. The direction of the play is towards this freedom from motion, from the restrictions of life's ' cold bonds '—

> no bolts for the dead!

But although this tendency is strong there is no suggestion of death, as a cessation of action, being the final absolute.

IV.

If these conclusions are not perverse it should be evident that *Cymbeline* cannot be regarded merely as a lighthearted pastoral romance and that there is not the slightest evidence for suggesting ' relaxed control.' The ' neatness ' of the final scene is seen to be, not the hurried finishing-off of a task become wearisome, but the natural consequence of the direction of the play, which is towards a repose achieved in spite of violence, the brutal action which constitutes the substratum of experience.

In the first place it has often been noted that Cymbeline himself does not act but only suffers, a will-less personality, and throughout the play there does seem to be a consciously expressed wish for a will, for the power to break clear of the entanglement of feelings, to have sovereignty over oneself. The whole plot is ostensibily ' the placing of the British Crown,' and the sovereignty of this Britain involves an abnegation of the will— Cloten and Imogen sigh for the wills of lesser people, and the latter

sacrifices a kingdom to gain 'two worlds.' The passivity and restrictions which such sovereignty entails are stressed.

This aspect of the passivity of the king must be related to the whole direction of the play, which finds its consummation in this final scene, where the circular movement is like that of a wheel coming to rest, as more and more of the 'action' is disposed of, circling nearer and nearer to the final immobility of the last tableau. This final immobility is, I suggest, the poise which the play achieves —up to this point the verse rapidly becomes less violent, less immediately evocative, and flatter, more neutral. The tautness of the body of the play is not relaxed, there is no relaxation in that sense, but the verse of the last speeches is flat and polished like a mirror reflecting the final tableau. All the previous suggestions of savage farce disappear leaving only the taut ironic inflection.

This critical element is important, suggesting as it does that the evocation of a static tableau, of the denial of action in this 'final peace,' is not an unqualified resolution of the strain and tension of the play. Cymbeline's speech in its recall of 'Ludstown' and 'our crookt smokes,' although it presents them as in a photograph, yet evokes that world of small, petty things which arouses such revulsion. There is still an ironic inflection to the peace, to the reconciliation of Britain and Rome. And in any case no ideals have been left standing. Imogen is 'a commodity,'

> a shop of all the qualities that man
> Loves woman for,

and the gods are but mischievous little boys who 'throw stones of sulphur.'

There is still the same tension which we have noted throughout, and this tension is only resolved, I think, in *The Winter's Tale*. in the more violent expression of the disgust-emotions through the cathartic 'savage humour' which there becomes more orgiastic and less self-conscious (in a limited sense) and through the simultaneous creation, then made possible, of the beauty of Florizel and Perdita.

F. C. TINKLER.

NOTE.

M. Legouis has pointed out that in this play Shakespeare has discarded all the unities, yet there is, I think, a strong tendency towards a formalism which quite transcends all questions of the unities, and which approaches the kind of formalism we find in the ballet. The strong note of irony throughout gives an air of detachment and in some scenes the movement is so stylized that it should obviously be played as ballet.

The two examples of this which occur to me are the Bed-chamber Scene and the Dream. (The similar effect of the last scene I have indicated above). In the first there is a deliberate black-and-white contrast, with Imogen sleeping

> as a monument
> Thus in a chapel lying,

a ' fresh lily, whiter than the sheets,' while Iachimo is a black devil—

> Though this a heavenly angel, hell is here.

The whole scene has a precise, photographic coldness, but with an undercurrent of excitement which suggests the convulsive *action* of the Evil in contrast to the static remoteness of the Good.

As regards the second, I am not at all convinced that the dream is not genuine ; the verse is so obviously ' inferior ' to that of the rest of the scene that it is difficult to believe that any of the minor dramatists could not have made a better job of the interpolation. Rather, I am inclined to believe, it represents a deliberate attempt to stylize the dream, through its commonplace conventionality, as a masque within the play, a scene of pure ballet where the words are relatively unimportant. Also it introduces an element of ironic farce in the descent of Jupiter, complete with eagle and thunderbolt, having the same effect as the introduction of the Soothsayer into the last scene, where the inclusiveness of the personality, its lack of dependance on arbitrary conceptions, is stressed. Moreover the stylized movement does provide a modulation from the verse to the prose. But none of these reasons are sufficiently strong to make a definite decision possible.

THE APOTHEOSIS OF POST-IMPRESSIONISM[1]

SOMEWHERE in the course of his reflections on the visual arts Diderot mentions the story of a young painter who invariably, before he set to work, flung himself down on his knees in front of his canvas, and exclaimed: 'Mon Dieu! Délivrez-moi du modèle.' He desired, that is to say, to be free from the tyranny of the schools, all the fashionable artificialities of the ruling style. And in the hey-day of Lancret, of Boucher and Fragonard, this must have seemed a bold, not to say a heretical, desire. But with the example of Greuze before him Diderot preached a return to the living model, the actual object itself in its natural surroundings. It should be noted parenthetically that the *pathetic* solution of Greuze did nothing at all to solve the real problem. For this

[1]For the purposes of this essay the term Post-Impressionism is used in a general way to denote all those movements that have developed out of the experiments and achievements, not only of the Impressionists proper, Monet, Manet, Pissarro, Jongkind, etc., but also and more particularly those of Cézanne, Seurat, Odilon Redon and their followers, the Pont-Aven group headed by Gauguin, van Gogh in his own strange way, and so on. It is this, the influence of the Cézanne branch, that has proved strongest to-day in what is somewhat loosely described as *The Modern Movement*. Picasso, Braque, Léger on the one hand, Matisse and the *Fauves* on the other, can be said to be the leading exponents of the movement, which, however, includes a long list of interesting names that can only be bracketed together in very elastic fashion. In Sculpture it is best represented by Maillol, Dobson, Brancusi and Moore. Nevertheless Symbolists, Futurists, Vorticists, the Surrealists and the Abstract Artists are all in their different ways derived from or related to that ferment in the arts, that gained such momentum in the closing decades of last and the opening ones of the present century, and of which Paris was and still is

problem, which then had not been clearly formulated, concerned the attitude of the artist to his environment, to that material from which inevitably he must choose the subject for his work-of-art. And after a century and a half of evolution in art a similar problem is again agitating the artistic fraternity, if for different reasons and in radically altered circumstances.

Diderot's young man, one feels, would effectually hold his own to-day among that band of increasingly vocal artists who animadvert on their practice and affirm their solidarity between the covers of ' Axis,' ' Circle,' ' Minotaure,' ' Verve ' and similar fashionable publications. For the members of this group arrogate to themselves the dubious distinction of forming the vanguard of the *Modern Movement,* and hitherto have been at great pains to be delivered of the model, indeed of all models whatsoever. They make a cardinal virtue out of this deliverance, and exult in the splendid freedom, the marvellous opportunities for self-expression that are theirs. They can dispense, some of these happy apostles of liberty, with a subject even ; for a subject is merely an encumbrance to a truly modern work-of-art.[1] With delightful insouciance they disport

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the storm-centre. There is for the art critic little value in pigeon-holing every single artist who ever lived into some group or school. But a number of artists animated more or less by similar principles may here for the sake of conciseness be referred to by the label which they themselves, particularly in their public utterances, affect, without implying thereby a pre-judgment of individual work. It is hardly necessary to add that there are many distinguished artists not mentioned in these pages, who may well have a claim to recognition when the history of this period comes to be written.

[1]In this connection it is worth quoting a pertinent passage from ' An Essay on Art ' by Jaques Maritain. M. Maritain is attacking the theory of the *gratuitousness* of art as elaborated by the Symbolists, Erik Satie and his school, etc., for whom ' the content of a work of art . . . (is) . . . an impurity to be got rid of.' He continues: ' No doubt if there is next to no matter, the work of the artist will more easily succeed. But art, as has been sufficiently dinned into our ears, ought not to be on the look-out for what is easy. It must have opposition and constraint, the constraint of

themselves in the rarefied air of absolute abstraction, and firmly imagine that the results of their activities possess some sort of mystical or occult significance. Plato himself couldn't have quibbled at such practice, which is conducted at so many removes of all reality, that it hardly matters any longer either to art or truth. However, the more militant protagonists of non-representational composition like Kandinsky and Mondrian, Piper, Nicholson, Ozenfant or Hélion should not be dismissed on that account. On the contrary, it is fascinating to watch how like sleepwalkers they balance themselves confidently and with not a little acrobatic skill on the edge of the abyss. And blissfully unaware of their precarious situation they not infrequently contrive some fascinating arabesques, which are important as evidence of the sort of times in which we live, if for no other reason. ' Painting,' writes M. Hélion, ' belongs to the world of concepts, and I expect to find a short cut through everything, to constitute a plan for projection common for ideas, instincts and perceptions. I compose the products of my instincts as they reach my eyes, each accepted as a fact or energy, with structures intellectually conscious, and with experiences of colours patiently and tenderly carried out through numerous charts.'[1] One must suppose that this expresses M. Hélion's meaning exactly! But to discover what Abstract Art is all about and to appreciate its peculiar merits, it is more satisfactory to go to the pictures or statues themselves. These merits in any case are simple and obvious enough. They need no quasi-philosophical circumlocutions, still less a sort of mumbo-jumbo incantation for their justification. The geometrical ingenuities of Ozenfant or Léger, Ben Nicholson's delicately coloured patterns, have occasionally a high decorative value, and fit in neatly with, while to some extent relieving, the monotonous severities, of what passes nowadays under the name of architecture. We can only be grateful, so long, that is, as we are not asked to believe a deep mysterious meaning invests these humble productions, and that they indicate a new and important

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rules and the opposition of matter. The more obstinate and rebellious the matter, the better will art, by its success in mastering it, realize its own end, which is to make matter resplendent with a dominating intelligibility.'

[1] *The Painter's Object*: edited by Myfanwy Evans.

development. Abstract Art, in short, like its cousin Surrealism, is a sectarian derivative of the Post-Impressionistic movement ; and their ascendency in the past few years is a more than suspicious indication of the way the wind is blowing and the increasing chilliness of the artistic climate in the future. In their more extreme forms they provide a convenient escape from the very pressing problems confronting the artist in the twentieth century.

In order to realize how pressing these problems are we need but turn to the work of Wyndham Lewis, who before the war was the leading representative of abstract art in England. For Wyndham Lewis, though sufficiently aware of the dilemma and without seeking to avoid the difficulties, has somehow managed to turn the situation to his own advantage. Nowadays, however, in discussions of modern art Lewis's name is seldom mentioned. In spite of the fact that he is, so to speak, the doyen of the Abstract cult on this side of the channel, he seems to the younger generation a little *vieux jeu*, ' pre-war ' ; while the surrealist, uncomfortable possibly that Mr. Lewis has stolen some of his thunder, dismisses him with a superior shrug. And it must be admitted that Wyndham Lewis is not a great painter, that he is not a master of his craft, in the sense that Rembrandt or Velazquez or Poussin were. When he really tries, as in the fifty or so new canvasses shown at the Leicester Galleries six months ago, he at once demonstrates his superiority in complex abstract design over the majority of his finicking contemporaries. On the other hand Lewis's idea of colour is crude and raw, so much so, that one is inclined to wonder on occasion whether there is not something the matter with his optic nerve. Even where crudity is in keeping with his satiric intent, those harsh passages of reds and browns and greys, have an opaqueness, an obstinate resistance to the eye, and fail to *realize*, as Cézanne would say, the interior organization of the subject represented. But Wyndham Lewis, as is notorious by now, knows only *One way* in art, whether it be painting or literature. He is the artist of the Great Without, of Externals, he likes to think of his work as ' classic and clear.' Unfortunately the resources of craftsmanship he brings to this portrayal are limited. His circular line soon becomes hard and inflexible, his surfaces break up into metal discs, into scaly slabs, triangular, ovoid or fig-shaped, which are arranged on the canvas in vibrating and intricate patterns. The robot-like creatures that

people his mechanical universe have the same ghastly immobility of a motion picture reel suddenly arrested. Yet there is enough passion behind these symbols to compensate for the rather insensitive handling of the brush. A genuinely tragic element informs this satiric art, something profoundly and imaginatively experienced. Had his craftsmanship been equal to his ambition, and his methods not been further limited by an inability to conceive movement as only in Space and never in Time, he would be occupying a place of far greater strategic importance in modern British art. As it is, his great effort, even in such striking compositions as ' Inferno ' and ' The Stations of the Dead,' gives the impression of being abortive, as if he had attempted the impossible. And it may well be that he is the last of his kind, the last performer to attempt anything on an epic scale in a society which, as he himself writes, ' for the first time in civilized history ' will be composed of ' men without art.'[1] If so, with Wyndham Lewis Post-Impressionism goes down with colours flying.

Now it is a remarkable fact that British painting, which the *Times* critic, in reviewing the great exhibition at the Louvre, rightly pronounces a provincial school, ' but with a positive provincialism,' nevertheless at one stage of its history exercised a decisive influence on the course of art in Europe. Suddenly it shed its provincial airs, and found itself occupying, if not a dominating, at least a prominent, position among the leading schools. At one and the same moment it could boast of Turner, Crome, Bonington, Cox, Girtin, Cotman and Constable, as brilliant a constellation of talent as any that could be found on the continent. Nor did the virility and the native character escape the notice of foreign experts. In 1824 ' The Haywain ' was exhibited at the Louvre and awarded a gold medal, while a similar honour was conferred on ' The White Horse ' at an exhibition in Lille. Discerning Frenchmen scented something in this painting out-of-doors, this approach to the object in a natural light, that struck them as fresh and original. They felt that this saturation of the artist in the actual scene brought a new quality into painting, that it discovered a new method for imparting subtle variations of mood and emotional timbre to the subject. During the siege of Paris Monet and Pissarro spent most of their

[1] *Men Without Art.*

time in London studying Turner's pictures. This study undoubtedly enlarged their conception of the possibilities of oil-paint, and from it they derived many of their ideas about the pitch of lighting and the colours of shadows. Moreover Richard Parkes Bonington lived the greater part of his life in Paris, and not a little of it in the studio of Delacroix. That he left his mark on French Romanticism and was in some respects a much finer artist if a less ambitious one than Delacroix, is no longer in dispute. But in relation to the new painting his personality and technique are even more striking in some of his lesser known landscapes, viz.: ' Landscape with a Timber waggon ' in the Wallace Collection, which in brush work and treatment are reminiscent of Constable.[1] Finally there is his ' Young Man in a Top hat,' in which the subject is so frankly stated and with such a subtle management of proportion and space, that the ground was thoroughly prepared for Manet a decade before Manet was born.

No doubt other influences were at work, such as that of Velazquez and the newly discovered Japanese painting. It would be misleading to suggest that the renaissance in art eventually nicknamed Impressionism originated in the work of these few English painters. Nevertheless their share in it was a vital one and the movement cannot be understood without them. For the time that it lasted, and by the middle of the century already it had waned, this brief moment of glory promised to secure for British art a leading instead of a provincial status in Europe. It has had to wait nearly a hundred years, years of woeful degradation, before it began once more to recover a little of this distinction and exhibit some of its old vitality. With the arrival of Sickert, Wilson Steer, John & Co., English painting at last was rescued from the morass in which the Pre-Raphaelites had left it floundering. But the original impulse, the inspiration for this revival came from across the water ; our country cousin relationship to the dominant school was re-established, with the cousin showing his authentic individuality. Yet the work of these men was, and still is, to some extent characterized, in a way that some younger painters, Duncan

[1]Both Constable and Bonington were pupils of Girtin, that youthful but potent spirit, who seems to have stage-managed the movement behind the scenes in the few years of his working life.

Grant for instance, are not, by English tendencies that are less desirable. A strong predilection for the portrait has always had a somewhat constricting effect on our art, which has further been disabled by a *literal* attitude of mind on the part of the artist, a habit of observing facts with a sort of documentary interest. When it is free from this kind of curiosity, as Gainsborough was in certain moods, notably in the blue-paper washes, which in their summarized statement and intense lyrical feeling, seem remarkably *modern*, the effect at once is that of a larger and finer experience. In contrast Turner in so many of his vast water-colours sets down everything in the most circumstantial detail, with a control and penetration into every aspect of the scene, that takes one's breath away. Yet Turner, with all his virtuosity leaves one exactly where one was before. In the same way Sickert, though he paints delightful genre pictures like his master Dégas, rarely transforms the objects he represents into something new. He seems to lack the ideal contemplative detachment. In spite of his insight into character, his sense of the dramatic and a superb management of iridescent light, he never completely transcends the temporary and the local, a furtive description or the ironic anecdote. Sickert's satires and genre pictures, in short, are of the order of Hogarth and George Morland rather than that of Jan Steen or Chardin.

In the Post-Impressionistic period British art has again merely inhabited a suburb of Paris. And it has retained very little even of the national flavour, which formerly at least made our suburbanism a unique and refreshing experience for the worldly metropolitan visitor. At first the Vorticists, it is true, in their Camden Town stronghold ably officered by Gaudier, Wadsworth and Roberts, with Wyndham Lewis leading the band and Ezra Pound doing all the staff work, on their own initiative and without any encouragement from headquarters, delivered an energetic flank attack. It was short-lived, however, and failed to capture any really prominent positions. And after the war our ' positive provincialism ' became less and less positive and more and more absorbed into that slightly hot-house cosmopolitan atmosphere of Paris, London and Berlin, which is so amusing and agreeable for dining-out of an evening, but which is hardly the right milieu to develop the concentration needed for the highly specialized job of an artist. And yet Christopher Wood, whose artistic life covered exactly the interval

between the false boom of 1921 and the great slump of 1929, breathed this air with a delighted, an ingenuous relish, and thrived on it. He, so to speak, consumed it at such a rate, that so far from reducing him to anaemia and impotence as it did many another, it gave him a new kind of strength. In fact he rapidly got clear of it altogether, and was just beginning to move in a more stable and robust sort of element, when his activities were cut short. That this untimely death was a first-class disaster for British painting, the sequel has abundantly demonstrated. It is idle to speculate what might have happened had Wood lived. It is impossible to guess in what direction he might have developed any further, and if he had, whether he could have inspired a revival of the kind England witnessed a hundred or so years ago. Nor is this the moment to determine his exact status as an artist. It is, however, possible to assess the integrity of his artistic personality. And from such an assessment one is led to suppose that Christopher Wood was perhaps aware he had done all he could ever hope to do in the circumstances, and that his death therefore occurred at the appropriate moment.

For a parallel to this young man's extraordinary productivity during the nine years of his painting career one would have to go back to Bonington, who died in 1828 at the age of twenty-six. Bonington, like Wood. received his artistic education in Paris. But, unlike Wood, he matured and found himself very quickly. In his earliest canvases even, *e.g.*, ' Henri III and the English Ambassadors,' he reveals a sureness of purpose and a confidence in execution, which are almost miraculous for a man of his years. Wood was not a prodigy of that calibre. But on the other hand, his very personal touch and originality are apparent in his clumsiest imitations. This trying-out his hand in the manner and the mannerisms of half-a-dozen leaders of the Parisian school was for him an apprenticeship and a necessary process of assimilation. He was fortunate, when on leaving school he decided to become a painter, in making the acquaintance of a number of influential people, Alphonse Kahn and Michael Sevier amongst others, who could put him in the way of useful contacts. In those first few years already he received encouragement and advice from Kisling, Picasso and Cocteau. Furthermore he had opportunities to travel widely in Europe and the Near East. In the autumn of 1923 he

came to London to study at the Westminster school, and was much in the society of Wyndham Lewis. He seems to have lived fully and enjoyed himself. All the time he produced pastiches of other painters with a facility that might well have proved ruinous to a more tenuous spirit. During the next few years he worked industriously in Paris and London, and made friends with the Nicholsons, Dobson and John. But the most important feature of his Paris days was his association, which became increasingly close, with Picasso. The Spaniard taught him how to contrast, harmonize and modulate his colours, and his inexhaustible versatility and experimentation stimulated Wood in his search for an individual style. He spent months in Cumberland and Dorset, and roamed about in Provence, Spain and Egypt. People began to take notice ; his talent was beginning to be talked about. Diaghileff commissioned him to do designs for a ballet (Romeo and Juliet) ; the Beaux Arts Gallery organized the first exhibitions of his work in London. An unfortunate interlude with Raoul Dufy in Monte Carlo yielded a whole series of fake Dufys, which, in view of the fact that Dufy himself is not exactly all above board as a painter are very fake indeed. For these formula sketches of Dufy, it is necessary to insist, are not painting in any true sense of the word. Like the conventions of Abstract Art they can be regarded as agreeable decoration (particularly for the nursery), but on a higher level they are irredeemably trivial and sterile. Dufy's persistent reputation as an artist is an apt comment on the taste and the critical standards of the age. Like many modern painters Wood did not wholly escape this tendency to leave pictures in sketch form. But what for the Impressionists was a disciplined technique, has to-day become a superficial routine. It is a very different affair from Constable's struggles towards a special mode of feeling that produced the elaborate and finished sketches for some of his major works, ' The Leaping Horse,' for instance. Too often the modern sketch masquerading as a completed painting merely disguises a failure to cope with the difficulties inherent in the subject. Though in justice to Wood it should be added that he never descends to trivialities or topical anecdotes.

In April, 1929, a representative collection of his paintings was shown at Tooth's ; and in the following Spring he shared another with Ben Nicholson in Paris. Most of this work was done in

Cornwall and Brittany, which places, villages, beaches, harbour scenes, seem to have inspired him to his best efforts. During June and July, 1930, in Tréboul in Brittany he finished an amazing quantity of pictures. He returned to England in the following month, spent a day or two in the Isle-of-Wight no one knows why or with whom, and proceeded to Salisbury where his mother lived, to whom he had always been deeply attached. On the same day, the 21st August, 1930, he threw himself underneath a train on Salisbury station, and was killed. Whatever the motives underlying this act, it is fairly safe to assume that certain pathological traits in his personality coupled with an addiction to opium smoking, had not a little to do with it. What concerns us here, however, is that it occurred at a moment when he had emerged from the fashionable cosmopolitanism of the time, and seemed to be imparting a new vitality to his native tradition. The magnificent memorial exhibition promoted last March by the Redfern Gallery has at least proved his right-of-place in that tradition.

One would be hard put to it to think of the name of any other contemporary English artist who could have filled those large rooms with over 600 works all done before his thirtieth year, without ever seeming mechanical or monotonous. No doubt the quality of all this work is extremely variable. Often it has only a superficial effectiveness ; comparatively little of it can be deemed completely satisfying and successful. Yet so authentic is his idiom, that everything he does has a look of freshness and spontaneity. He exults in such a naturally exuberant inventiveness that the spectator is at once disarmed and forgets about the models. Of these, indeed, there is a sufficiently heterogeneous assortment. The crowded wall at the New Burlington Galleries bristled with the tricks and formulas patented by such spectacular showmen as Braque, Picasso, Dufy, Modigliani, Vlaminck, Matisse, not to mention van Gogh and Seurat, as well as a few others. But as has already been indicated Wood used another man's tricks imaginatively in order to make a unique and personal discovery. When for example he adopts Braque's flat pattern cubism to paint a still life, it is merely a method to organize spatial values. But his vision remains his own, so that Braque's clichés disappear and acquire a new meaning. In fact the apparent eclecticism of much of Wood's earlier work, though it cannot always be defended on its own ground, should

be regarded as the progress of an interior development towards the mature expression of his final period. Few other English artists moreover have had a feeling for colour so impeccable and delicately attuned. He retains the freshness of Constable in a palette full of vivid and surprising contrasts. Such a frankly sensual delight in colour for its own sake and the deft handling of a rich impasto (*e.g.*, the sea in ' Tréboul 1930 ' runs in a smooth stretch across the canvas as if entirely unworked by the brush) should entitle him to a very special place in English painting. His draughtsmanship, finally, is always adequate, and at times revels in the most captivating rhythms. And everywhere a rich vein of fantasy runs through his work, sometimes gay and simple, as in ' Dancing Sailors Brittany,' then sinister (' Tiger and Arc de Triomphe,' ' The Yellow Man ') or merely inconsequential. Of this latter kind ' Zebra and Parachute ' is a fine example carried out with such imaginative directness, subtlety in design and tonality, that by comparison nine-tenths of Surrealist painting is mere trifling.

In a valuable monograph published at the time of the exhibition, Mr. Eric Newton describes the peculiar flavour of Wood's painting as of something ' virginal,' a quality of innocence that ' can be achieved either by regarding all things as pure and welcoming them with an open heart, or by regarding most things as impure and avoiding them at all costs. Christopher Wood's was the first militant way to innocence. An odd blend of moods is the result.'[1] And he points to the indefinably tragic atmosphere that broods somewhere in the background of so many of his pictures. This undigested element in the soul of the artist was something more fundamental than the attitude of sophisticated-naïvety which gained him an ephemeral popularity with the smart set of the nineteen-twenties. But it is this also that gave intensity to his moods that make Wood one of the most lyrical of modern artists. In those eighteen months before he died Christopher Wood painted a series of pictures that are a complete and perfect expression of his individual sensibility. In these scenes of Brittany and Cornwall the different phases of Post-Impressionism have been fused, and put at the service, as it were, of the tradition of English landscape. Newlyn, Portscato, St. Ives or Concarneau, Douarnenez,

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[1] *Christopher Wood*, by Eric Newton.

Tréboul, are rendered with an exquisite sensitivity and a firm grasp of construction and design.

Though there is an extreme economy of detail in Wood's pictures, they are the product of the same saturation of the artist's mind in the physical features of the scene as can be found in Cotman or in Constable. Not the transient features so prized by the Impressionists, but the sense of something organic and permanent if no less fragrant. Yet his influence has on the whole not been salutary and yielded little of importance since his death. Admiring disciples sedulously copy the odd gestures of his fisher-folk, all the quaint inventory of the toy sea-side. But the tricks that underlie the sophisticated-naïve attitude are not likely to be of much use to another painter, for those are the very things that date most readily. After Christopher Wood Post-Impressionism seems a spent force.

' And now where are we? Where is the object, or the subject or the sub-object, or whatever it is your fancy to call it?' asks Mr. John Piper nervously. And he proceeds to review, alas! with what revealing complacence, the various dodges artists have of late resorted to in order to replace ' the object Cubism has destroyed.' They are highly significant, these artful dodges, of the spiritual decay in our time. ' Henry Moore has landed us back in the stomach of Pre-history, while Paul Nash, again, leaves us with the bare-washed bones of it. Abroad we find Arp also in history's midriffs ; Mondrian charting the seas of pre-creation ; Hélion constructing complex symbols, new yet age-old, part-game and part-worship ; and Mirò rocketing among the stars and comets. It all seems to me an attempt to *return* to the object, and not to escape from it.'[1] One can only envy Mr. Piper his optimism! And how should he not have faith, poor man? No serious artist can really admit the irrelevance of his existence and his activities to society, and still keep going. At any rate it is only charitable to suppose that Mr. Piper and his colleagues will be as completely *en rapport* with the object when they have recovered it, as they now seem to be with whatever fills the void for them in its absence. They should remember, however, that the solution of difficulties does not lie in the formation of cliques, still less in marching under the

[1] *The Painter's Object.*

banner of political slogans. To-day the artist who sincerely strives ' to make matter resplendent with a dominating intelligibility ' necessarily stands alone. That is a discouraging position for any one, and to maintain requires a very unusual amount of stamina. And moral stamina is not conspicuously common at the present time, nor for the matter of that has ever been in the world's history. Still, though Post-Impressionism is in decline, it is too early yet to despair that something better will not take its place, and art be given another lease of life.

RICHARD MARCH.

WORDSWORTH : A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

I.

WORDSWORTH'S poetry is not only an extensive, it is a difficult country ; and therefore, before attempting to cross it, I have thought it worth while to summarize what I imagine I know about it. Much of this may be legend, and I put it forward without any confidence that it is anything more ; but a summary of legend is useful if, by internal confusion or apparent improbability, it brings home the amount of labour necessary to attain the truth.

II.

And first of the traps or pitfalls with which Wordsworth's poetry abounds. One of these is I think its mere amount, by which we should not allow ourselves to be unduly impressed. This may seem a slight temptation, but I am not sure that it is easy to avoid. Staying-power is a comparatively rare thing, and even the appearance of it moves at times to admiration. With Wordsworth it is an important question, how much of it is mere appearance ; and an answer can be given only after going through a poem line by line, enquiring into the significance of each. It is not sufficient

to listen for the general effect of a passage, which may be a sonorous cadence with a buzzing of meaning in the background. Wordsworth was skilled in sounding cadences, and with him as with any other poet meaning should be either more or less than a buzz.

From the *Prelude* and the *Preface to the Lyrical Ballads* it is I think at least probable that he looked on poetry as a sort of natural product, like fruit and flowers ; brought into being by nature rather than by man, or by man only as nature works in him. Thus from one point of view he might be said to shift responsibility for composition from his own shoulders on to nature ; from another, to arrogate to himself the privilege of unrestrained fertility. As nature a hundred daisies for a single oak, so he throws up a hundred insignificant verses for one of substance. But towards them all, as towards the daisies and the oak, he feels the sort of reverence due to the manifestations of a higher power. He receives them into his collected works, and arranges them in a cunning order to ensure that all shall be read ; and in that way he at least dissuades, if he does not intimidate his critic from the task of discrimination.

III.

Secondly we must take care not to be dazzled by his rhetorical skill—' rhetorical ' is a word with a number of senses, but I use it, I believe, in the best. It would be difficult to exaggerate this skill in Wordsworth, and the danger which results from it.

Nature, he seems to have thought, produces only the bare essence of poetry, to which man must fit an outer garment of words and metre ; therefore a poet, if he would not be mute, must set himself to acquire the knack of metre, as he would any other accomplishment. Wordsworth laboured early and long for this end. ' I have bestowed great care upon my style,' he said, ' and yield to none in the love of my art.' From his use of the terms elsewhere, it seems probable that by ' art ' and ' style ' he meant the power simultaneously to observe the rules for lucid and grammatical English, and for any verse-form in which he happened to be working. He practised and attained proficiency in a great many : in the sonnet, and in the forms of Spenser, Milton, Pope, Hamilton, Burns and Scott.

The sort of merit which he thus brought within his reach, and which it is important to recognize and name lest, remarkable as it is, it be mistaken for something yet more remarkable, is fairly clearly illustrated by his poem *Yew Trees*. This is familiar, if for no other reason, for being often quoted as an example of the grand style outside Milton. It may be so ; but I do not think we can call it anything more than an exercise in Miltonics.

> . . . those fraternal four of Borrowdale,
> Joined in one solemn and capacious grove ;
> Huge trunks!—and each particular trunk a growth
> Of intertwisted fibres serpentine
> Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved,—
> Nor uninformed with Phantasy . . .

A brilliant exercise, but only brilliant. On re-reading I am sometimes halted by the line in which Time the Shadow, Death the Skeleton and the rest are said to ' meet at noontide ' ; there seems promise here of a complication of ideas ; but if there is, it is soon untied. The ghostly company meet only for the unexpected purpose of united worship, or for the incongruous one of listening to the flood on Glaramara. The yew-trees themselves lack depth, and might as well be figures in tapestry. Wordsworth, I should say, is not much interested in his images or his ideas, except as they serve to support certain rhythms ; it is these which claim the greater part of his attention, and which, as with a sterile art, he exploits for their own sake.

Mastery over metre qualifies him to be a conversational poet—the sort of poet, that is, who flourished in a number of countries during the Renaissance, and in England in the early eighteenth century. At these places and periods a firm tradition of poetic performance permitted the treatment of an unusually wide variety of subjects at least as efficiently in verse as in prose, and often with the urgency and vividness of verse. A number of passages in *The Prelude*, like the description of his dame at Hawkshead or of the sights of London, reach a high level of excellence in this way. One of them, on the Terror, suggests that he might have maintained himself fairly consistently at the highest level, if he had been secure of an audience ; for poetry of this kind, to persist, depends on a society whose members continually stimulate and

restrain. But the audience was lacking, and for various reasons he gradually withdrew into a more and more remote exile. In consequence, some of his later verse, which has been praised for its technical perfection, is no more than scholarly ; it is directed, that is, at a distant, almost a disembodied audience. And some of the rest suffers from a lack of focus, as though it were directed at two widely differing audiences at once. This is the fault of the didactic part of *The Prelude*, where Wordsworth seems unable to convince himself that what he has to say is of itself such as to interest the reader. Therefore by means of orotundity and ornament he seeks to provide an elegant diversion, to combine, as it were, the roles of Lucretius and of Dyer in *The Fleece*. The result is a compromise which I find intensely irritating, though it has been praised. But *The Prelude*, because of a multitude of ingredients, deserves more than one paper to itself.

IV.

A third kind of trap can be described in Wordsworth's own words. Readers of ' moral and religious inclinations,' he says, ' attaching so much importance to the truths which interest them . . . are prone to overrate the Authors by whom those truths are expressed and enforced. They come prepared to impart so much passion to the Poet's language that they remain unconscious how little, in fact, they receive from it.' The vocabulary is that of intellectualism ; but what it expresses might serve as the basis for a distinction between more and less valuable responses to poetry.

Wordsworth often wrote, not only about joy in widest commonality spread, but about common joys. His subjects in themselves, and apart from any treatment he may give, are such as to evoke memories or aspirations in which it is pleasant, if not always profitable or proper to indulge. If the opportunity for indulgence were offered alone, it might be immediately rejected ; but its nature is masked—and this is the greatest danger ; perhaps the last two kinds of traps, which I have taken separately, should be considered together—its nature is masked by the accompanying rhetoric. It is easy to be affected by the subject and by the style or metre of one of Wordsworth's poems, as by two separate things: the one appearing to dignify the other, because of their accidental association ; but neither modifying the other—neither the metre

imposing itself upon and ordering the subject, nor the subject filling out the cavities of the metre. And at the same time it is easy to assume that the poem as a whole is effective when the truth may be that as an integrated whole the poem does not exist. The point is a difficult and, I think, an important one, which will justify one or two illustrations.

Arnold's selection contains a number of not very striking poems ; but the one of least merit is possibly that which begins :

> Pansies, lilies, kingcups, daisies,
> Let them live upon their praises ;
> Long as there's a sun that sets,
> Primroses will have their glory ;
> Long as there are violets,
> They will have a place in story :
> There's a flower that shall be mine,
> 'Tis the little Celandine.

The lilt, the tone, is that of a music-hall ditty ; it is difficult to imagine how anyone with an ear sensitive to rhythm, with a feeling for more than the surfaces of words can have have written it. As Wordsworth had both, the explanation may be the abdication of responsibility to which I have already referred. But how has the poem come to be approved? For it figures in other anthologies besides Arnold's—for example, in the *Oxford Book of Regency Verse*. In the first place the language is clear, the metre gives no occasion for stumbling ; it has at least the negative virtues. And secondly the subject, or a large part of the subject, is humility, which is a popular quality ; it inculcates the popular opinion that to be humble is to be happy, even to be merry ; and finally, it harmonizes with the absentee or vacation cult of nature which was a force in English society and in English poetry from the middle of last century onwards. There was nothing that, in his better moments, Wordsworth despised more than he did this cult ; there was nothing about which he wrote more lamely—or rather, when he can be taken to be writing about it, he is always at his lamest. Yet his choice of subjects is such, and his unfailing rhetorical skill, that he has imposed himself upon the cult, and figured as its canonized poet. In a similar way he has been the canonized poet of English and of Anglican institutions ; and as

recently as 1915, with the publication of Professor Dicey's *Statesmanship of Wordsworth*, he was hailed with renewed conviction as the poet of patriotism. His sentiments on that topic are of course unexceptionable ; and he dresses them out in a language which the percipient can take to be that of inner compulsion, of inspiration. Yet some of these patriotic effusions, as Mr. Leavis has said, are no more than claptrap ; the best probably should not rank as high as what I have called his conversational successes. It seems that patriotism, like religion, is not a safe theme for poetry ; and that, for the reason quoted from Wordsworth, it is at least as difficult to read as to compose.

The isolated appeal of the subject in passages like the above is no doubt too obvious for it nowadays to form a trap. But it was on account of their obviousness I chose them ; it seemed to me they might help in a further discussion, of which the conclusion is not obvious at all. To what extent are we justified in acknowledging Wordsworth as a mystical poet, as is often done? Are we being deceived somewhat in the manner described—that is, are we responding to the subject by itself, and to certain tricks of style by themselves, rather than to a poem in which both are in alliance and unison? By ' mystical poet ' I do not mean one who has intense experiences on the occasion of natural phenomena, nor one who is convinced of the importance of spirit in the life of man and in the affairs of this world. This is perhaps not an unusual meaning for the term, but I employ it in a narrower and I hope more helpful sense. I mean by it a poet who has the sort of experience Wordsworth claims in one or two passages of *The Prelude*—that of a communion or a community with something outside and above the world, with a divine soul or with the highest truth.

The possibility that in these passages the subject may make an isolated appeal arises from the flattering nature of the belief that such communion is possible to a fellow-man ; and from certain comfortable consequences which seem to follow. Wordsworth may play upon these rather than convey the experience upon which, if the belief is true, it must ultimately be based.

I take as an example the passage in which he seeks to tell what happened to him when, writing an account of his experiences, he realized that once he had crossed the Alps.

And now recovering, to my soul I say
I recognise thy glory ; in such strength
Of usurpation, in such visitings
Of awful promise, when the light of sense
Goes out in flashes that have shown to us
The invisible world, doth Greatness make abode,
There harbours whether we be young or old.
Our destiny, our nature and our home
Is with infinitude, and only there ;
With hope it is, hope that can never die,
Effort and expectation and desire,
And something evermore about to be.

Let me first note about this passage the ample warrant it provides for all that has been said about Wordsworth's skill in rhetoric. Like Milton, he knows how to draw out the sense variously from verse to verse ; or, as he put it to Klopstock, to secure ' an apt arrangement of pauses and cadences, and the sweep of whole paragraphs.' Secondly, the occasion seems not unsuitable for the display of such skill: an attempt, it seems, is to be made to communicate something by its nature difficult, if not incapable of communication, upon which therefore only a number of sallies can be made. If each is doomed to be ineffectual, all of them together, and the variety of their points of departure and return, may be not wholly without effect. ' Strength of usurpation ' and ' visitings of awful promise ' corroborate each other ; and if it is not clear exactly how, inevitable lack of clarity is part of what is to be conveyed. The figure of an invisible world made visible by a flash of light which thereby extinguishes itself, as though by a supreme effort, recommends for acceptance a difficulty for which, even when accepted, there can be no hope of solution. And as the passage goes on, a solution begins to appear less and less necessary: the metre becomes more regular, the difficulty is not at all impossible, it is even exhilarating to live with. The line, ' With hope it is, hope that can never die ' encourages to aspiration; ' Effort and expectation and desire ' suggests an unremitting eagerness in the soul. The last line, ' And something evermore about to be ' is the most regular of all.

The trouble is that it is too regular—too regular to be smooth.

There is no peace about it, but a merciless beat ; and with infinitude there surely should be peace. When we have reached this line the suspicion arises, I think, that Wordsworth is not in fact where a mystic should be—with infinitude, outside or above the world ; but rather, well within it. And if so some of the preceding lines need to be reconsidered, and our opinion on them to be revised. Aspiration can be unreservedly welcome only where, as with infinitude, there is certainty that it will be fulfilled ; elsewhere ' hope that can never die ' is but a euphemism for hope that has never lived. And elsewhere than with infinitude effort and expectation and desire are grim companions: that eagerness is unremitting is no guarantee that, in this world, it will not be baffled. If we turn our attention from the sound to the sense of the last line we see it to have the minimum of meaning: there is nothing in the future to which it will not apply. So far as we can talk of a future in eternity it is of a piece with the present and prophecy cannot arouse mistrust ; but to a creature in time the mere idea of futurity cannot bring consolation, and confidence based upon it and nothing more is a poor thing. Loudly to proclaim such a confidence is a still poorer thing.

If we read over the passage with these and similar reflections in mind we discover I think that the rhetoric is not only skilful, it is too obviously skilful: it has no natural movement which, if we admire, we admire as concrete in the substance which moves ; but rather a mechanical, to admire which we must abstract and even oppose it to the substance. ' How subtle the play of the levers ! ' we say, and all the time are thinking of the unexpectedness of such subtlety in dead matter. The poem is not alive, but an extremely cleverly constructed simulacrum ; a robot put together no doubt for high purposes ; but still not a poem.

It is sometimes said that, to judge with any security of a mystical verse, one should be a mystic oneself. That would however reduce the number of judges to such an extent, that it is hardly likely to be true. It may be suggested that the questions whether Wordsworth succeeded in conveying a mystical experience, and whether he had it, are two different questions, the one falling under biography, the other under criticism ; and that the answers to them are not necessarily identical. Not that biography is irrelevant to criticism, to which it can give valuable if extra-

technical aid ; and the biographical question it is true might profitably be raised here. But it would require much time and space: to analyse (among other things) the biographical element in *The Prelude*, to compare it with the similar element in *Tintern* (from which it seems to differ in not unimportant ways ; as though Wordsworth altered his views about his own experiences as he grew older), and finally to compare that biography, according to whatever view prove more acceptable, with the history of a mystic or mystics who are fairly widely acknowledged to be such.

In default of such aid, it is perhaps advisable to consider somewhat closely a second passage. I will choose the lines about the Simplon Pass, as the most difficult ones I know to criticize satisfactorily. If, as is only too likely, I cannot make clear my point about them and their kind, perhaps I can at least make the difficulty clear ; and that is a sufficiently important matter.

The lines are as follows:

> . . . the brook and road
> Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy Pass,
> And with them did we journey several hours
> At a slow step. The immeasurable height
> Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
> The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
> And everywhere along the hollow rent
> Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
> The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
> The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
> Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
> As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
> And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
> The unfettered clouds, and region of the heavens,
> Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light
> Were all like workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same race, blossoms upon one tree,
> Characters of the great Apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of Eternity,
> Of first and last, and midst, and without end.

I had better say at once, to prevent misunderstanding as far as I am able, that I think the greater part of this passage is very

impressive indeed. I think it so impressive that I am disappointed perhaps more than I should be with the rest ; but this I think distracts and divides the attention, although it is short. It may also influence unfavourably the style of the whole.

In these lines Wordsworth, it seems to me, is trying to do not one thing but two ; or rather, having done one thing and done it well, he goes on to another which perhaps by its nature cannot be so well done. Down to the last three lines he is concerned to express a feeling of surprise, almost vexation: like the thwarting winds he is bewildered and forlorn ; while the woods, the waterfalls and the rocks about him threaten ruin and decay, they seem fixed for ever. They threaten destruction to one another, and even to the spectator—there are sick sights and giddy prospects—nevertheless there is and there will be no annihilation, only persistence. He finds escape from this bewilderment by, so to speak, living into the phenomena by which it is caused: in all of them he finds the working of a ' single mind,' with which he can identify himself, or of which he can become a part. And then he sees that the stresses which they exert upon one another and upon himself, all of which he experiences in himself, serve only for their mutual support. This notion of immobility resulting where action and change might be expected occurs elsewhere in Wordsworth's best poetry, of some of which it is almost a mark ; but in such work he rests in the notion as the only satisfaction which the circumstances can afford. Here however he takes a step further, and seeks a satisfaction which so far from springing from the circumstances seems only to discount them. The bewilderment yields to or is transformed into a revelation, an apocalypse, and the ground for it is removed by degrading the woods, the waterfalls and the rocks from being themselves eternal into types and symbols of eternity. And this eternity, rather than charged with a greater significance than what are said to be its symbols, seems empty of everything: it is dismissed in flat pentameter, the only content of which is the highest common factor of the many associations hanging about a scrap from the liturgy. In other words Wordsworth (I think) finally adopts an answer which has no particular relevance to, and is therefore an escape from, his immediate problem ; which, as it might answer any problem, answers none, and is provided for him rather by talk about mysticism than by mysticism itself—

by religiosity rather than religion: at least by a deadening, not a vivifying force.

Perhaps I exaggerate: but I think it is a danger that these last few lines, connected with their predecessors by the sweep of the metre, and offering the reader an alternative against which, in the context, he is least on his guard, may hinder him from entering into the full and difficult meaning of that context ; and they may do so, even when the alternative is rejected. How Wordsworth came to write in this mixed and broken way, if, as I think, he did do so, is obviously a serious problem ; it would almost seem that acute perception was something of which he had learnt to be afraid. Elsewhere there are traces of a similar fear ; of which, of course, it would be a gross impertinence to speak in any tone of censure, not of regret. Perhaps also the phenomenon may be not unconnected with what has already been described as an abdication of responsibility in composition.

V.

From a summary account of what may be the traps—the marshy lowlands, the hidden gulfs—in Wordsworth's poetry, I pass to an account which must be yet more summary of what seem to be its highlands. From a distance it is no less possible to be mistaken about these than about the former ; and as they are of wider significance, I speak with greater diffidence.

It is I think a useful question to ask how Wordsworth first came to believe that he was a poet ; a man, that is, in whom nature works so as to produce poetry. As he thought that nature, instead of repeating herself, provides for a development of the spirit or a gradual revelation of truth, it must have been because he felt he had something new within him.

Part of it was a peculiar sensibility to nature, or a novel intimacy with her and her manifestations. When he was fourteen, he says, he became conscious ' of the infinite variety of natural appearances which had been unnoticed by poets of any age and country,' and resolved ' to supply in some degree the deficiency.' But he was more than an observer: the other childhood experience must be remembered, that he sometimes felt himself slipping into ' an abyss of idealism.' He was part of what he saw, or what he

saw was part of him. And as early as the *Descriptive Sketches* he speaks of ' abandoning the cold rules of painting ' to consult both ' nature and his feelings.' From that date onwards he gives no mere lists of natural appearances, but groupings of them as they served to prompt a dominant emotion.

As long as what he calls the idealism persisted, or whenever it reasserted itself, this emotion was some degree of joy ; for there was nothing other than himself by which he might be thwarted. It marks various well-known passages in *The Prelude*:

> The sea was laughing at a distance ; all
> The solid mountains were as bright as clouds,
> Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light ;
> And in the meadows and the lower grounds,
> Was all the sweetness of a common dawn,
> Dews, vapours and the melody of birds,
> And labourers going forth into the fields.

It is at its most exuberant in the spring poems of the *Lyrical Ballads*:

> Love, now a universal birth
> From heart to heart is stealing,
> From earth to man, from man to earth ;
> —It is the hour of feeling.
>
> One moment now may give us more
> Than years of toiling reason:
> Our minds shall drink at every pore
> The spirit of the season.

But exaggerations of this kind are themselves a criticism of the mood: as by its nature it is fleeting, it can be maintained for any length of time only by self-deception, to which one means is a loud boasting.

Already in his childhood Wordsworth had made such a criticism: ' idealism ' he had recognized as an ' abyss,' and to save himself had put out his hand. In doing so he was not repeating the Johnsonian experiment: his intention was not to refute a metaphysic, but to repeat a type of experience, that of being resisted, which for a time he had forgotten. Resistance,

thwarting, comes from things outside himself, other than himself: and the second new thing about his poetry is I think its preoccupation with *other things as other*. In various ways they threaten his equanimity, disturb his peace.

In his early years there seems to have been a rapid oscillation between the sense of joyous union, and one of divorce from the external world ; the latter giving rise to unhappiness, and at times to fear. A mountain pursued him ' with measured motion, like a living thing ; ' and ' after he had seen that spectacle '—these are his words:

> . . . for many days my brain
> Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
> Of unknown modes of being ; in my thoughts
> There was a darkness, call it solitude
> Or blank desertion, no familiar shapes
> Of hourly objects . . .
> But huge and mighty Forms that do not live
> Like living men moved slowly through the mind
> By day and were a trouble to my dreams.

From time to time he returns to this notion of opposition, of enmity—not only between himself, but between other people and the external world ; and at times, as in the Simplon Pass, between the external occupants of the world. But it does not long remain the centre of his interest. Conceived of as enemies, other things are in a measure like himself, and in that measure reconciliation with them might be possible ; it is in the measure in which they are unlike himself, in which they are other, that the fascination they exert is unescapable.

Are they real? he seems compelled to ask. They are so different, that there is no quality however abstract he might split off from himself—not even the bare quality of being—in which they might partake. Either they exist exactly as he does, and are himself—but that is impossible ; or they do not exist at all—but they obviously do. And as though to convince himself of the latter fact in a subtler manner than by clutching at a wall, he considers repeatedly in his verse the sort of realities which maintain themselves under apparently impossible conditions.

> . . . the lifeless arch of stones in air
> Suspended, the cerulean firmament
> And what it is ; the river that flows on
> Perpetually, whence comes it, whither tends,
> Going and never gone ; the fish that moves
> And lives as in an element of death.

A rainbow he saw near Coniston, ' the substance thin as dreams,' nevertheless stood unmoved through the uproar of a storm,

> Sustained itself through many minutes' space,
> As if it were pinned down by adamant.

And reflections in water occupy his attention either because of the instability of the element on which they are traced—like that of Peele Castle, which ' trembled, but it never passed away ; ' or because of their apparent identity with the object reflected, from which nevertheless they are other. Mr. de Selincourt quotes an early version of some lines in the *Excursion*:

> Once coming to a bridge that overlooked
> A mountain torrent, where it was becalmed
> By a flat meadow, at a glance I saw
> A twofold image ; on the grassy bank
> A snow-white ram, and in the peaceful flood
> Another and the same ; most beautiful
> The breathing creature ; nor less beautiful
> Beneath him, was his shadowy counterpart:
> Each had his glowing mountains, each his sky,
> And each seemed centre of his own fair world.
> A stray temptation seized me to dissolve
> The vision—but I could not.

He had picked up a pebble, but dropped it unthrown. The passage has many defects, but I quote it for one or two phrases—' another and the same,' ' each had his glowing mountains,'—and for the conclusion. This suggests that the habit of contemplating things which exist when and in a way in which existence seems impossible has led to a respect for them which is almost superstitious. When other things are fleeting they are capable of being destroyed ; but that they are fleeting is a vindication of their reality as other, and this forbids destruction like a desecration.

Reflections in water retain form and colour ; and carrying analysis as far as it can go, Wordsworth seeks to know what they have which makes them to be other than their objects. What are the principles, which render possible a multiplicity of things? which separate him from the external world, as objects in the external world are separated from one another? The ultimate answer he gives is time and place, duration and extension: it is because the reflection of the ram is elsewhere than the ram itself that, apparently identical in all other respects, it is yet obviously different from the ram. And it is upon duration and extension which, highly abstract as they are, yet seem the soil and sap of other reality, that the superstitious respect just noted finally bears. However confused his account of the experience when he realized that he had crossed the Alps, the experience was of an impressive kind ; and, stripping the account of its reference to eternal destiny, we see the experience to have consisted merely in the realization that, whereas he had been on one side of the Alps, he was now on the other. Or we might say that, as he does not contrast the two sides in respect of any of their qualities—their orientation, their contour or their covering—he realized there is diversity of place. It is this, and this alone, that ' wrapt him in a cloud.' That a mountain barrier rose between two particular places—that they were the *sides* of a mountain—was not his concern, for there rose between them another barrier which, if more ideal, is more impassable. It was erected by the very notion of space, of which the parts are by definition external one to another ; each, for the rest, an *other*. The experience is perhaps more easily discerned behind a second passage from *The Prelude*, which describes an entry into London. At the time Wordsworth was not occupied by any ideas of the capital as a storehouse of tradition or magnificence, and his immediate surroundings did not invite attention—there were ' vulgar men ' about him, and ' mean shapes on every side.' His senses and his memory were unheeded or asleep. But he was awake to the notion of the boundary, the imaginary line which sets up place against place, and by crossing which, from having been without London, he would find himself within.

> The very moment that I seem'd to know
> The threshold now is overpass'd . . .

> A weight of Ages did at once descend
> Upon my heart.

By a sort of intellectual vision he saw himself as having been *there* and now being *here*, and this was sufficient to move him deeply.

Duration is marked and made manifest by events ; and there are passages in some of Wordsworth's poems which are perhaps only too well known, in which the sole purpose seems to be to record that something, no matter what, has happened. Throughout a number of stanzas the metre is supported by little more than expletives, repetitions and tautologies ; our attention is claimed, it seems, only that it may be cheated of an object—for the stanzas contain neither narration nor description, and very little reflection. The reader is exacerbated or wearied, though Wordsworth, presumably, is full of excitement: so that when something finally happens, if only the prevarication of a child or an old man's tears, it is hailed with relief.

Passages of this kind are little more than biographical or psychological curiosities: in them, Wordsworth is so fully occupied with abstractions that he forgets the concrete business of living. But when he returns he is the better qualified to face its problems, having a keener eye for their elements. The external world, for example, he sees quite clearly is not to be subdued or placated like an enemy ; in so far as it is external, it is there while we are here, then while we are now: it is irreducibly *other* than ourselves, so that to stand in any relations to it, to affect it, even to be aware of it, seems to imply a contradiction. If we wish to give any account of it, we can employ only adjectives which are the opposites of those which we apply to ourselves: if we are active then it is immobile, if we are alive then it is dead, as points in space are dead. Yet it is in such a world that he finds himself, and with which he must come to terms, on pain of a sense of desertion blanker than that to which he was first summoned by the pursuing mountain.

His solution seems to be something like the following. He imagines—but imagine is a weak word ; he creates and it is part of his own experience—a kind of being in which both the external world and himself can share. It combines the characters of both: internally it is active and striving, as he is, but looked at from

outside it is immobile like the world. While for himself, that is, he renounces the possibility of action upon other things, he need not on that account feel cut off from them. They and he are united by the common possession of a hidden activity, in the knowledge of which he can feel, while among them, at home and at peace. If his spirit is sealed, so is that of the dead Lucy, so are rocks and stones and trees ; and with dead things he has a sort of sympathy. The universe as thus apprehended has no very remote resemblance to the Simplon Pass: if it cannot quite properly be spoken of as a balance of stresses, it yet contains a number of stresses which, though they are active, produce no alteration. At these moments of apprehension Wordsworth describes himself as ' seeing into the life of things,' or elsewhere, as seeing ' the very pulse of the machine.' The word ' machine ' is important, for it gives that sense of change within stability which I am trying to suggest. And the pulse is conveyed in verses, some of which are among the best he wrote, which describe ambiguous creatures like the horse

> . . . that stood
> Alone upon a little breast of ground
> With a clear silver moonlight sky behind.
> With one leg from the ground the creature stood
> Insensible and still—breath, motion gone,
> Hairs, colour, all but shape and substance gone,
> Mane, ears and tail, as lifeless as the trunk
> That had no stir of breath ; we paused awhile
> In pleasure of the sight, and left him there
> With all his functions silently sealed up,
> Like an amphibious work of Nature's hand,
> A Borderer dwelling betwixt life and death.

The horse has one foot off the ground, and that it is clear he might move is one of the reasons for the pleasure which he gives ; the other reason is that he is restrained from moving, or that he restrains himself. Similar to the horse in this way are the solitary beings whom Wordsworth met at night, or in almost permanently lonely places: like the discharged soldier, who remained ' fix'd to his place,' ' at his feet His shadow lay, and moved not.' ' I wish'd to see him move,' exclaims Wordsworth, that he might be assured of the reality of the soldier ; but when at last the soldier did so

> . . . I beheld
> With ill-suppress'd astonishment his tall
> And ghastly figure moving at my side.

Most carefully drawn of them all is the Leech-gatherer, who is compared both to a ' huge stone,' and to a ' sea-beast '—that is, he is capable of locomotion, but will not engage upon it. He is

> Motionless as a cloud . . .
> That heareth not the loud winds when they call

—he does not hear, not in the sense that he is deaf, but that he will not obey—

> And moveth all together, if it move at all.

I do not know whether Wordsworth was acquainted with the doctrine of the school that all motion is by parts ; whether or no, something of the kind has a share in the effect which is intended here. ' The cloud must move all together '—that is it cannot be imagined to move, for if it did one part would be seen to take precedence of another ; and yet it may move, for otherwise it would not have a share in being, in reality.

VI.

So far as I know Wordsworth was quite new, and has remained unique, in concerning himself in this way with ' being as such ' : the old phrase is convenient, in spite or because of its habit of bearing now the minimum, now the maximum of meaning. He explored the significance, or examined the experience, of being for other things, and this modified the experience of being for himself. It would be a mistake, I think, to see in this any influence of contemporary German thought : there is a difficulty about the dates. Wordsworth was not sympathetic to German thinkers, and the whole course of his dealing with the problem suggests that it was posed for him by what he lived through, rather than by what he read or what he heard in Coleridgean conversation. And as the achievement in this matter was his own, he used it as the starting-point for a new enterprise.

The problem of suffering, if he awoke to it later than to that of the external world, came in early manhood to occupy him no

less continually. The notion of being at which he arrived seemed to offer promise of a solution. For if suffering arises from thwarted effort, either to affect other things or to avoid being affected by them, it is a consequence of a creature's desire to operate beyond itself. And if this is renounced, as Wordsworth conceived it might and should be, suffering as the occasion of rebellion or complaint will cease. But is it humanly possible to carry renunciation to the point which may be necessary? It is conceivable that other things should close in to such an extent upon a creature that, if he yields to them, any inner activity left is too insignificant to be called human. There are three poems which are perhaps especially important by the answers they return to this question.

They are *The Leech-gatherer*, *The Lesser Celandine*, and *Michael*. It will be possible to notice them only briefly.

When he comes across the leech-gatherer Wordsworth is a man of moods, and he generalizes from himself to the human race:

> As high as we have mounted in delight,
> In our dejection do we sink as low.

But the leech-gatherer, like the stone to which he is compared, knows no moods ; he has few hopes, and such disappointments as come his way do not disturb him. Though the stock of leeches has dwindled, and they are to be found only by wandering alone about the weary moors,

> Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may.

He preserves a courteous and cheerful demeanour, even ' stately in the main.' Wordsworth marvels there should be ' in that decrepit man so firm a mind ; ' and contrasting the firmness with his own levity, which is at the mercy of other things, he accepts the implied rebuke.

The Lesser Celandine usually closes its petals against the foul weather:

> But lately, one rough day, this Flower I passed
> And recognized it, though an altered form,
> Now standing forth an offering to the blast,
> And buffeted at will by rain and storm.
>
> I stopped, and said with inly-muttered voice,
> ' It doth not love the shower, nor seek the cold:

> This neither is its courage nor its choice,
> But its necessity in being old.
>
> The sunshine may not cheer it, nor the dew,
> It cannot help itself in its decay.'

Other things have compelled the Celandine to forfeit the last scrap of independence and dignity ; therefore it can administer no rebuke—it cannot be admired, but only deplored.

Nevertheless it has had what might be considered its due of glory : if it falls a victim, it is only to the forces of time and senility about which, as nothing escapes them, there seems something equitable. In *Michael* the shepherd and his family are involved in a similar fate while still in their prime—for the old man is ' strong and hale '—and although they have taken every measure to avoid it. Like the leech-gatherer they make few claims on life :

> Our lot is a hard lot ; the sun himself
> Has scarcely been more diligent than I ;

they are ' neither gay perhaps, nor cheerful ; ' and if they have objects and hopes, it for ' a life of eager industry,' for the continued performance of the tasks which their ancestors performed before them. Their only pleasure is ' the pleasure which there is in life itself,' that which is necessary to the pulse and implied in the spark of consciousness. They are submissive to the natural course of things, of which their tasks are almost a part ; and, had circumstances permitted, it might have been said of them as of their ancestors, that when

> At length their time was come, they were not loth
> To give their bodies to the family mould.

They seek to preserve a submissiveness even to their abnormal afflictions ; and the hopes and fears which these cannot but provoke, if wild, are immediately curbed. Each watches the other for signs of strain :

> . . . the Old Man paused,
> And Isabel sat silent . . .
> . . . her face brightened. The Old Man was glad.

At night Isabel

> Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
> And when they rose at morning she could see
> That all his hopes were gone.

Here it is the ready confidence of the son which redresses the balance:

> She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
> Were sitting at the door, ' Thou must not go . . .
> For if thou leave thy Father he will die.'
> The youth made answer with a jocund voice ;
> And Isabel, when she had told her fears,
> Recovered heart.

But Luke too has his misgivings ; and when setting on his journey he reaches the public way he finds it necessary to ' put on a bold face.' All is in vain ; Luke is driven into exile, and Michael survives hardly as a man but as an animal—by his brute strength.

> His bodily frame had been from youth to age
> Of an unusual strength.

is the first thing we are told about him, and almost the last. He is moreover a sick animal, able to perform some but not all of his instinctive tasks. When he visits the site of the projected sheepfold,

> He never lifted up a single stone.

The verse of the poem is a delicate thing. It has almost ceased to beat, and seems maintained only by the flutter of tenuous hopes and sickening fears.

> . . . the unlooked-for claim
> At the first hearing for a moment took
> More hope out of his life than he supposed
> That any old man ever could have lost.

Wordsworth, who was so often an imitator, here speaks with his own voice ; and the verse is the contribution he makes to prosody. He uses it rarely—elsewhere than in *Michael* only, I think, in *Margaret* and occasionally in *The Brothers* ; but it should be taken as a measure of his work. Against it the verse of the *Simplon Pass*,

though very different in intention, reveals itself as forced and harsh. As I believe I suggested, what is noble in the *Simplon Pass* is in a measure debased by the immediate context.

VII.

From *Michael* it appeared that the extinction of suffering is the extinction of humanity. To be sure of this lesson, it had been necessary for Wordsworth to experience suffering in an exquisite form, unadulterated in any way—as for example with the satisfaction of playing either to himself or to an audience. There is no audience in *Michael*, except shepherds too close to the hero to do anything but ' feel pity in their heart.'

I do not know that any other poet has done quite the same thing ; I do not think that Wordsworth did it either before or since. It is as though he exposed a nerve which, as it was too sensitive for the impressions it could not but receive, must immediately be deadened.

The conclusions of both *The Leech-gatherer* and *The Lesser Celandine* suggest that something like this happened. Though both are less intense than *Michael*, neither maintains such intensity as it possesses to the end : suddenly both run down with a sickening whir—or, to change the metaphor, the music in both poems is broken by a discord. After the discovery of firmness in the leech-gatherer, Wordsworth does not prepare himself for any rigorous self-discipline : he ' laughs himself to scorn ' :

> ' God,' said I, ' be my help and stay secure ;
> I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!'

In this jauntiness there is no relevance to his circumstances. It is as though he had become oblivious of these ; as though they were now presented to the deadened nerve : and the jauntiness had opportunity to supervene from a disconnected part of his consciousness. In *The Lesser Celandine* the break is even more noticeable. It happens in the last line of a stanza :

> The sunshine may not cheer it, nor the dew ;
> It cannot help itself in its decay ;
> Stiff in its members, withered, changed of hue.
> And in my spleen, I smiled that it was gray.

To be a Prodigal's Favourite—then, worse truth,
A Miser's Pensioner—behold our lot!
O Man, that from thy fair and shining youth
Age might but take the things Youth needed not!

The word ' spleen ' has a multitude of meanings, one of which might be suitable to the poem ; but there is no reason, other than a complete abandonment of seriousness, why Wordsworth should smile. And this would explain the final stanza, which is the sort of platitude with which we dismiss an argument when we have not solved it, and when it has come to weary us ; or the copy-book maxim with which we hand over a vexing problem of conduct to chance for its decision. Wordsworth's maxim is not so much irrelevant to his problem as a denial of the conditions which it presupposes. The Celandine 'cannot help itself in its decay '—' if only it could!' observes the final stanza.

But, as though foreseeing the outcome of the solution attempted in *Michael*, already in *Margaret* Wordsworth had prepared for another way of dealing with suffering. Unlike *Michael*, *Margaret* plays to an audience, who are the author and the Wanderer ; and like all spectators of tragedy, in so far as mere spectators, they are in the role of *tertius gaudens*. Evil to the actor is good to them. Some of the better poems of the middle years—up to *Peele Castle* and beyond—are devoted in part at least to affirming the belief that evil is in addition and in some way good. The belief may be true, or may be necessary ; but as, without revelation or an augmentation of the faculties, it cannot be comprehended without at least partly neglecting evil, the poems, if they can be looked down on from no mean height, can certainly be looked down on from *Michael*. Others of Wordsworth's occupations were, with the help of the optimistic Hartley, refashioning his memories of the past so that they might support the belief (and hence *The Prelude*, in passages like the two we have examined, is of the nature of a palimpsest) ; or indicting scholarly poems and less disinterested ones on behalf of patriotism, Anglicanism and the like. Some of these have already received summary notice.

But an exploratory paper is no occasion to draw the lower contours of Wordsworth's poetry. It is enough to indicate the high peaks ; for even about these—I hope I may be forgiven this last repetition—a distant observer is likely to be mistaken.

JAMES SMITH.

WILLIAM DUNBAR[1]

TO Dunbar Chaucer has become the ' rose of rethoris all ' ; the phrase is sufficient to awaken doubt as to the substantiality of Dunbar's appreciation of Chaucer. An examination of his poetry reveals that as a poet he is in fact as different from Chaucer as it was possible for another mediæval poet to be. Plainly, to begin an account of Dunbar from a comparison between his work and that of Chaucer would not be to the point, unless to bring home the inaccuracy of styling Dunbar a Scottish Chaucerian. He is at a still further remove from Chaucer than Henryson, and, being nearer the European centre in his time than the latter, he belongs to the very latest mediæval phase.

But to find the explanation of Dunbar's power in the influence, already, of the Renaissance would, again, be a misrepresentation. What gives him (in spite of, and because of, his ' lateness ') his extraordinary power, whereby he is perhaps the greatest Scottish poet, in his skilled command of the rich and varied resources of language open to him, and, related to this, his command of varied metres adapted from what were by his time the rich accumulation of mediæval French and mediæval Latin verse, as well as, and often united together with, indigenous alliteration and assonance used as Hopkins rather than as Swinburne uses it. This variety of language and of metres has its counterpart in a variety of modes so bewildering that our first difficulty must be to determine where the centre of Dunbar's work as a whole is. It is my object in this paper to suggest that the core of his living achievement, that part of his achievement which we read as if it were contemporary, consists, not of the ceremonial poems, *The Goldyn Targe*, *The Thrissil and the Rois*, but of the comic and satiric poems, *The Twa Mariit Weman and the Wedo*, *The Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis*, the goliardic blasphemies, *The Flyting*, *The Satire on Edinburgh*, and the more acrid and radical satires that

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[1]*Scottish Poetry from Barbour to James VI*, edited by M. M. Gray (Dent & Sons).
The Poems of William Dunbar, edited (with a good introduction) by W. Mackay Mackenzie (Porpoise Press).

merge into the saturnine poems that give his work as a whole its dark cast.

These comic and satiric poems are not less traditional than the ceremonial poems. The difference is in the nature of their several traditions, or, to put it otherwise, in the ways in which they are traditional ; and this again works down to a difference in their language the social and moral implications of which should appear. The language of the comic and satiric poems is essentially the language of what was living speech in Dunbar's ' locality,' which was not without its place in the still homogeneous mediæval European community ; whereas the ' aureate diction ' of the ceremonial poems of Dunbar, the court poet, is at a distinct remove from living speech, and therefore from life, including Dunbar's own, in any locality ; is in fact *purely* ' literary ' or ' poetical,' rootless, without actuality. The difference between the former and the latter is in consequence that between a greater and a much lesser degree of inherent life. Without life informing it, language, however brilliant its surface, and however aristocratic its lineage, is mere idle verbiage.

Yet *The Goldyn Targe* and *The Thrissil and the Rois*, though they may be pressed to one side, for the lively reader, by the vitality of the comic and satiric poems, are what in Dunbar's case had become of the direct line of European allegorical poetry descending from the *Roman de la Rose*, and on this ground they demand some attention in any attempt to give an account of Dunbar's work as a whole ; this attention I prefer to give them at the beginning rather than the end of this paper. To Dunbar himself and to his contemporaries they doubtless seemed the centre of his work, as indeed they might be if the value of a poem is in proportion to the amount of conscious effort that seems to have been expended on it. But even to Dunbar's first readers I doubt if they were the poems which really yielded the most enjoyment.

The terms of Dunbar's celebration of Chaucer and Gower at the end of *The Goldyn Targe* are inappropriate in everything else except that they fit their context. It is Dunbar himself in the *Goldyn Targe*, not Chaucer, whose ' termis ' are ' enamelit ' and ' celicall ' and whose ' lippis,' ' tonguis,' ' mouthis ' are ' sugarit,' ' aureate,' ' mellifluate.' He goes wrong here as a critic at the same time unconsciously revealing why here he goes wrong also as a

poet. The first five stanzas of the poem are a similarly dazzling exercise in the rhetoric, the heavy ornamentation, the overloaded decorativeness, then, in that ' late ' century, fashionable. But the poem is inadequate as a poem not because it is rhetoric, but because of the nature of that rhetoric itself. Rhetoric must be something more fundamental, more deeply rooted, than this, to be at the same time fully satisfactory as poetry. Dunbar's highly conscious interest in language carried with it certain obvious dangers. There is here a kind of rootless, mechanical delight generated in the mere verbal exercise but it is not healthy ; it is not the same thing as the life, the abundant energy of the living language which Dunbar elsewhere successfully shares. *The Goldyn Targe* remains a monument to the fact that you cannot make a poem out of an interest purely in language, and the manipulation and arrangement of it ; and when the interest is in ' poetic ' language artificially enriched by over-lavish borrowing from alien sources the resulting kind of richness may easily be fatal to life. Where this kind of rhetoric wears off, as in the beautiful passage about a hundred ladies who land in a meadow from a ship, it is significant that the poetry is revealed as something much more like Spenser than even the Chaucer of the translation of the *Roman de la Rose*. Mediæval allegory is here seen changing into something else ; it is the death of allegory, its swan-song.

The ceremonial poems were of course written for ceremonial occasions ; they correspond to the pageants and processions of these occasions. To this extent they correspond to something in the public life of Dunbar and the Scotland of Dunbar's time in which ritualistic pomp and show, pageants and processions played a part such as to suggest, the times being late, that this heightening of the outward forms, this colouring up of the outward shows is the symptom of some inner spiritual corruption rather than simply what it may at first seem, the spontaneous expression of the natural joy of life in a rather primitive people ; there is nothing spontaneous about *The Goldyn Targe*. We cannot afford to ignore this in trying to understand the meaning of Dunbar's work as a whole. Together with the conscious interest in language the ceremonial poems exhibit it may have a bearing on the other poems of Dunbar that are so unlike the ceremonial poems.

At this point we may well have begun to ask whether Dunbar gained anything by being, in his particular place and time, a court poet. What he did gain may be exemplified most purely by the small poem *To a Ladie*. If the ceremonial poems show that he was among other things a professional court poet, the lyric *To a Ladie* shows him capable also of a genuine courtliness. It would seem absurd to claim uniqueness for this trifle, except in the obvious sense that every poem is unique ; but in Dunbar's work it is something of a rarity, something of a surprise in itself ; it is at one end of his range ; in it the main European tradition is alive, not as in the ceremonial poems dead. Nor is it simply a concentration of what Dunbar does diffusely in the ceremonial poems ; it contains something that is not there present ; there is in it a certain unexpectedness, almost wit.

> Sweet rose of virtue and of gentleness
> Delightsome lily of every lustiness.

You would expect ' lily ' where you get ' rose ' and ' rose ' where you get ' lily ' ; they are interchanged ; the lady is virtuous and desirable at the same time. The poem shows Dunbar's skill as a metrist ; but that skill is, here, not merely metrical ; it is part of the unexpectedness ; it contributes, for example, to the surprise of the final line of the first and, again, the second stanza. Allegory and wit are thus brought together, the *Roman de la Rose* and, except that the poem remains in itself completely mediæval, the conceitedness of the sixteenth-century Petrarchian sonnets. This intellectual element in it, balancing the emotional, is exactly what the purely ' local ' love songs of Burns are without.

But, as has been indicated, *To a Ladie* is not representative of Dunbar's characteristic achievement. It is in the comic and satiric poems that his energy, which is Dunbar, finds in various shapes and forms, its free and full expression ; and it is (I think) in *The Twa Mariit Weman and the Wedo* that the comic zest, the sheer enjoyment and appetite, reaches its maximum of bursting exuberance ; for this poem, though in the tradition of the *chanson à mal mariée* (This is how these women, when they get together in secret, tear their husbands limb from limb) is primarily comic not satiric ; in it we devour the ripe grapes. The force of vulgar gossip is raised to the degree of art ; ribaldry assumes this proportion. I choose a passage almost at random.

I wald me preen pleasandly in precious weedis,
That luvaris might upon me look, and ying lusty gallandis.
That I held in more dainty and dearer be full meikle
Na him that dressit me so dink ; full dotit was his heid.
When he was heryit out of hand, to hie up my honoris,
And painted me as a pacock, proudest of fedderis,
I him mis-kennit, by Christ, and cuckold him made.

What the poem seems essentially to represent in the force of the impudent (' lowd thai lewch ') natural self rising up from among the people and asserting its right according to the ' law of luf, of nature and of kynd ' without respect or regard for moral authority, the dogmas and restraints of the church.

Ladyis, this is the legend of my life, though Latin it be nane.

But the profane figure of the widow in church is an object of purely comic contemplation, a symbol ; there is no hint of arbitrary condemnation.

Than lay I forth my bright book on breid on my knee
With mony lusty letter, illumynit with gold ;
And drawis my cloak forward owr my face white
That I may spy, unespyit, a space me beside . . .
When friendis of my husbandis beholdis me on far,
I have a water sponge for woe, within my wide cloakis,
Then wring I it full wylily and wetis my cheekis

(The consequence is she is provided with no dearth of lovers in secret).

And all my luvaris leal, my lodging persewis,
And fillis me wyne wantonly with welfare and joy :
Some rounis, and some ralyeis ; and sum readis ballatis ;
Some ravis forth rudely with riotous speech,
Some plainis, and some prayis ; some praisis my beauty
Some kisses me ; some clappis me ; some kindness me proferis.

In spite of the dramatization we to an appreciable extent share, we are made partakers of the comforts of ' these creatures of the kyn of Adam,' the delight in ' wickedness,' the stolen delight in unrestrained sin ; the eavesdropper behind the hawthorn is scarcely an intruder.

Apon the Midsummer evin, mirriest of nichtis,
I muvit furth allane, neir as midnicht wes past
Besyd ane gudlie grein garth, full of gay flouris,
Hegeit, of ane huge hicht, with hawthorn treis
Quhairon ane bird, on ane bransche so birst out his notis . . .
I saw thre gay ladeis sit in ane grene arbeir . . .
Thir gay Wiffis maid game amang the grene leiffis ;
Thai drank and did away dule under derne bewis ;
Thai swapit of the sweit wyne, thai swanquhit of hewis.

There is no essential contrast between the natural scene (described because background, in more conventional language, but still bursting with the opulence of midsummer) and the gossips ; the beauty of nature and the ugliness of vice, as some moralist has suggested. The hawthorn, the birds and the gossips are filled with the same heady wine, the same exuberance of life ; they are equally on the plane simply of nature and instinct.

The Dance of the Sevin Deidly Sinnis comes from the same common source in the popular speech, though in another of these traditions and exhibiting another variety of this humour. The humour here is savage, primitive, uncivilized. Its *expression* is conditioned by the dance frenzy in the rhythm.

And first of all in dance was Pride,
With bare wild back and bonnet on side,
Like to make wastie wanis ;
And round about him, as a wheel,
Hang all in rumpillis to the heel
His kethat for the nanis:
Mony proud trumpour with him trippit
Throw skaldand fyre, ay as they skippit
They girn'd with hideous granis.

The poem is commonly commended for a fantastic blending of the comic with the horrible, the ghastly, the macabre, but that is to misunderstand the essential nature of this savage folk humour. There is no such dichotomy and no such sophistication in the poem. There is nothing fantastic or supernatural in it either. It shares the vigorous, earthy actuality of the popular sermons of the Middle Ages.

Syne Sweirness, at the second bidding,
Come like a sow out of a midding,
Full sleepy was his grunyie:
Mony sweir bumbard belly-huddroun,
Mony slute daw and sleepy duddroun . . .
(Gluttony)
Him followit mony foul drunkart,
With can and collep, cop and quart,
In surfeit and excess;
Full mony a waistless, wallydrag,
With wamis unwieldable, did furth wag . . .

There is no incongruity, intentional or otherwise, in introducing the figure of the Highlandman at the end; Pride ('bonnet on side') and Ire are just as 'local.' But they are at the same time 'local' against the whole mediæval religious (and ecclesiastical) background.

Whill priestis come in with bare shaven neckis,
Than all the fiendis leuch, and made geckis,
Black Belly, and Bawsy Brown.

The Dance of the Sins belongs to the grotesquerie of the late mediæval popular imagination.

We shall by this time have observed that there is a good deal of the goliard even in those poems of Dunbar which are not, as *The Dregy of Dunbar* and *The Testament of Kennedy* are, primarily goliardic. The goliardic parodies should be read with Dunbar's own serious hymn in mind. These latter are scrupulously on the model of the Latin hymns, ritualistic, formal, stiff. The symbolism (I think of the beautiful *Rorate celi desuper*) is the extremely conventionalized symbolism of the Latin hymns. Latinized diction is used; and lines of Latin are inserted. But the ecclesiastical world, the language of which was Latin, was something actual in Dunbar's own world: the lines of Latin fit, without incongruity, into even his profane poems, as they would not into the purely 'local' poems of Fergusson or Burns. The incongruity in the goliardic poems is not essentially between the Latin lines and the others (most goliardic poems were wholly in Latin) but in the clash between sacred associations and the profane sentiments of lustfulness, eating and drinking.

Ego pacior in pectore,
This night I myght nocht sleip a wink ;
Licet eger in corpore
Yit wald my mouth be wet with drink.
Nunc condo testamentum meum,
I leiff my saull for evermare
Per omnipotentem Deum,
In to my lordis wyne cellar ;
Semper ibi ad remanendum,
Quhill domisday without dissever,
Bonum vinum ad bibendum,
With sueit Cuthbert that luffit me never.
A barell bung ay at my bosum
Of warldis gud I had na mair ;
Corpus meum ebriosum
I leif on to the toune of Air.

The blasphemy of the goliardic poems is the complement of the dogmatic belief accepted (there is no reason not to suppose sincerely) in the serious hymns.

Dunbar's satire when it is serious is, as we should expect, predominantly ecclesiastical and, at its deepest, religious. *The Satire on Edinburgh* is not satire of this serious kind ; it is again (unless I am much mistaken, for it has been found scathingly bitter) less satiric than comic.

May nane pass through your principal gaittis
For stink of haddockis and of skatis ;
For cryis of carlingis and debaittis,
For fensum flytingis of defame :
Think ye nocht shame,
Before strangeris of all estaitis
That sic dishonour hurt your name?

Your stinkand style that standis dirk,
Haldis the licht fra your parish kirk ;
Your forestairis makis your houses mirk,
Like na country but here at hame :
Think ye nocht shame
Sa lytle policy to wirk
In hurt and slander of your name?

At your hie Cross, where gold and silk
Suld be, there is but crudis and milk ;
And at your Tron but cockle and wilk,
Pansches, puddingis of Jock and Jame:
Think ye nocht shame,
Sen as the warld sayis that ilk
In hurt and slander of your name?

Plainly Dunbar is here thoroughly enjoying himself, even if the enjoyment is subordinated to a fairly serious and respectable intention. *The Flyting of Dunbar and Kennedy* is a poem of essentially the same nature. It is a comic *tour de force* of sheer language, but because the language is in this case living language, the coarse-textured vigorous language of the actual popular speech, it does not separate the poet from life but carries him towards it, its own life, wild, savage, uncivilized as its humour again is here:

Thow bringis the Carrick clay to Edinburgh Cors
Upoun thy botingis, hobland, hard as horne ;
Stra wispis hingis owt quhair that the wattis are worne:
Cum thow agane to skar us with thy strais,
We sall gar scale our sculis all the to scorne,
And stane the up the calsay quhair thow gais.

Off Edinburch the boyis as beis owt thrawis,
And cryis owt ay, ' Heir cumis our awin queir Clerk!'
Than fleis thow lyk ane howlat chest with crawis,
Quhile all the bichis at thy botingis dois bark
Then carlingis cryis, ' Keep curches in the merk,
Our gallowis gaipis: lo! quhair ane greceles gais.'

Than rynis thow doun the gait with gild of boyis,
And all the toun tykis hingand in thy heilis ;
Of laidis and lownis thair rysis sic ane noyes,
Quhill runsyis rynis away with cairt and quheilis,
And cager aviris castis bayth coillis and creilis,
For rerd of the and rattling of thy butis ;
Fische wyvis cryis, Fy! and castis down skillis and skeilis,
Sum claschis the, sum cloddis the on the cutis.

Flyting passages, monstrous pilings-up of language,[1] are a feature of both Dunbar's comic and satiric poems, and serve their various ends.

But there are many poems, many of them satiric, and together forming a considerable part of Dunbar's poetry, in which plainly the poet is not enjoying himself. To these we must finally turn to complete the meaning of Dunbar's poetry. At the root of these poems is the overpowering feeling that the times are late and evil everywhere dominant in the world.

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[1]Compare from *Complaint to the King*

> Bot fowll, jow-jowrdane-hedit jevellis,
> Cowkin-kenscis, and culroun kevellis ;
> Stuffettis, strekouris, and stafische strumellis ;
> Wyld haschbaldis, haggarbaldis, and hummellis ;
> Druncartis, dysouris, dyvowris, drevellis,
> Misgydit memberis of the devellis ;
> Mismad mandragis off mastis strynd,
> Crawdones, couhirttis, and theiffis of kynd ;
> Blait-mowit bladyeanes with bledder cheikis,
> Club-facet clucanes with clutit breikis,
> Chuff-midding churllis, cumin off cart-fillaris,
> Gryt glaschew-hedit gorge-millaris . . .
> Panting ane prelottis comtenance
> Sa far above him set at tabill
> That wont was for to muk the stabell ;
> Ane pykthank in a prelottis clais,
> With his wavill feit and wirrok tais,
> With hoppir hippis and henches narrow,
> And bausy handis to beir a barrow ;
> With gredy mynd and glaschane gane,
> Mell-hedit lyk ane mortar-stane.

The monstrous exaggeration develops into caricature, as again for example in *A General Satyre*

> Sic fartingaillis on flaggis als fatt as quhailis,
> Facit lyk fulis with hattis that little availlis,
> And sic fowill tailis, to sweip the calsay clene,
> That dust upskaillis ; sic fillokis with fucksailis.

The clerkis takis beneficis with brawlis,
Some of Sanct Peter, and some of Sanct Paulis.
Tak he the rentis, no care has he
Suppose the devil tak all their saulis . . .[2]

Sic pryd with prellatis, so few till preiche and pray ;
Sic hant of harlettis with thame bayth nicht and day.[3]

' This is the end ' is the final feeling conveyed. Distrust infects the air.

Is na man thair that trestis ane uthir . . .[4]

Fra everilk mouth fair wordis proceedis
In every hairt deception breedis . . .

Flattery wearis ane furrit gown . . .[5]
The sugurit mouthis with myndis thairfra
The figurit speiche with faceis twa . . .[6]

The disillusion is mature and deep-seated ; it proceeds from an ultimate dissatisfaction with everything that was connoted by the phrase ' the world.'

. . . the warld, feignid and false.
With gall in hairt, and honied hals.

I have ventured to call the satire in these poems, directed as it is chiefly (though by no means wholly) against ecclesiastics, not merely ecclesiastical but religious (though negatively so) because of the consciousness in them of the *loss* or *absence* of goodness and of any assurance of spiritual reality. The nearest Dunbar comes to such an assurance seems to me perhaps to be here:

Lord sen in tyme sa soon to come
De terra surrecturus sum,
Reward me with nane erdly cure

---

[2]*Of Discretion in Taking.*
[3]*A General Satyre.*
[4]*Tydingis fra the Sessioun.*
[5]*Into this World may none Assure.*
[6]*Of the Warldis Instabilitie.*

But me resave in regnum tuum ;
Into this warld may none assure.

The question to what extent the morbidity in these poems was temperamental, in Dunbar's case, and to what extent it was imposed on his poetry by his world, need not bother us. It is plainly something both profoundly personal and, since it is common to late mediæval poetry, much more than personal. In the *Meditation in Wyntir* it is given unusually *personal* expression. Winter was no doubt, especially for Dunbar, wretched enough in itself but it is explicitly from something more even than winter that he turns with such anxiety to the new season.

For fear of this all day I droop ;
No gold in kist, nor wine in cup,
No lady's beautie, nor luvis bliss
May lat ne to remember this ;
How glad that ever I dine or sup.

Yit, when the nicht beginnis to short,
It dois my spreit some part comfort,
Off thocht oppressit with the shouris.
Come, lusty simmer! with thy flouris,
That I may live in some disport.

This morbidity in fact explains the Epicurean strain in Dunbar's poetry, the desperate grasping at vivid enjoyments and vivid delights.

Now all this tyme lat us be mirry
And sett nocht by this warld a chirry
Now, quhill thair is gude wyne to sell,
He that dois on dry breid wirry,
I gif him to the Devill of hell.

The frequent images of dancing, music, drinking of red wine,

Sangis, ballatis, playis,

symbolize these delights, and the sprightly *ballade* measures of many of his poems represent them. But just as frequent is the sinister image of the gallows gaping, the violent images of cut-throats and cutpurses, and cartes and dyce associated with evil. It is

here that a comparison with Villon suggests itself. (That it should suggest itself emphasizes again the difference between Dunbar and Burns, who could not properly be compared with any poet outside the Scottish tradition). The obsession with death[7] was inevitable to some part of Dunbar's poetry coming where it did ; Dunbar inherited a world, part of which was mouldering in decay. That the sense of mortality is not more pervasive in his poetry than it is is due to the force of that tremendous principle of life (represented in *The Twa Mariit Wemen and the Wedo* and the other primarily comic poems) he could at times share with the peasant people. But where there is behind a clairvoyant recognition of the vanity of earthly things no supernatural assurance of a spiritual reality, the worm of death and corruption finally devours everything that is,

> Death followis life with gapand mouth
> Devouring fruit and flowering grane.

Thus the procession becomes the procession of Death:

> Unto the deid gois all Estatis,
> Princis, Prelatis and Potestatis,
> Baith rich and puir of all degree !
> Timor Mortis conturbat me.
>
> He takes the knichtis into the field,
> Enarmit under helm and shield ;
> Victor he is at all mêlée:
> Timor Mortis conturbat me.
>
> That strang unmerciful tyrand
> Takis on the moderis breist soukand
> The babe, full of benignitie ;
> Timor Mortis conturbat me.
>
> He takis the champion in the stour,
> The capitane closit in the tour,
> The lady in bour full of beautie ;
> Timor Mortis conturbat me.

JOHN SPEIRS.

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[7] *Of Man's Mortalitie* is one of Dunbar's finest impersonal expressions of it.

CORRESPONDENCE

EXACT THOUGHT AND INEXACT LANGUAGE

Sir,

Sir Arthur Eddington takes it ' that the aim of such books [of popular scientific exposition] must be to convey exact thought in exact language. The author has abjured the technical terms and mathematical symbols which are the recognized means of securing exact expression, and he is thrown back on more indirect means of awakening in the mind of the reader the thought which he wishes to convey.' To this Mr. E. W. F. Tomlin in your current issue replies that inexact thought is error.

I believe that Mr. Tomlin's statement reveals a complete lack of understanding of scientific method and scientific practice ; that physicists invariably employ inexact language (even when they express their ideas with mathematical symbols) and that they commonly arouse ideas in each other's minds by talking to each other in inexact terms. To say that the whole of physics is error may have some meaning within a prescribed domain of definitions, but to say it at large is very silly.

Let me give a few illustration. I draw a sketch of a bicycle. It will awaken the thought of a bicycle in the onlooker's mind even if it is an inexact sketch indeed. Next, I draw a blue print of a bicycle. This will awaken the thoughts of the pure detail of bicycle construction so powerfully in the mind of an engineer that he will be able to construct an actual bicycle from the print. Yet the print is an inexact picture of the bicycle—if we go down to the ten thousandth of an inch. Incidentally, a blue print is not a work of art and will arouse the emotion ' bicycle ' in nobody but an engineer. Next, let us think of the lunar theory. There is no doubt that Newton's law of gravitation is approximately obeyed by the Moon, yet when one attempts an analysis of the lunar motion *as precise as the observations allow* one is faced with small but definite discrepancies. We are able to say that the law of gravitation observed in Nature approaches Newton's exact law within certain limits: and all our arguments about the lunar motion are inexact. Newton's original data were much less exact than those obtainable by modern measurements. Exactness in physics is unobtainable.

How about exactness in argument? It is clear that in the final exposition of his reasoning the physicist endeavours to use an exact argument which contains implicit if not explicit reference to the inexactness of the data. Nevertheless the essential feature of an argument may often be contained in an analogy or in a simplified argument, and physicists commonly employ simplifications and analogies in driving home points to their colleagues. The statement ' the surface of Sirius is much hotter than that of the Sun and therefore radiates much more violet light per square centimetre ' is inexact but correct, and might be employed in a verbal argument in a laboratory any day. The reply might be ' why more *violet* light?' to which a legitimate but inexact method of provoking the attitude in the objector would be: ' You know that red-hot bodies are cooler than white-hot bodies, and that white-hot bodies radiate more violet light per square centimetre than red-hot bodies, and in general the hotter the body the more violet light.' The inexact argument reproduces the essential features of an exact one with which I will not trouble your readers.

The dividing line between inexactitude and error may be hard to draw in some difficult cases, but happily common sense nearly always comes to the rescue.

Turning back to expositions of popular science, the justification for publishing books of inexact arguments ought to be that every simple argument in the book is a rough parallel of some technical argument published elsewhere which is as exact as the nature of the problem will allow. It is my own opinion that Eddington is remarkably successful in producing admirable parellels, the beauty of which can only be realized by those who are acquainted with the ' exact ' arguments which they represent. His *Space, Time and Gravitation* is a popular representation of the very difficult Relativity theory for which no adjective seems too high praise, and it led at least one reader to a comprehension of the subject which was filled out rather than altered by subsequent study of Eddington's own ' exact ' treatise.

Yours faithfully,

RICHARD WOOLLEY.

The Observatory,
Cambridge.
March 15th, 1938.

MR. TOMLIN replies:

Mr. Woolley objects to my statement that ' inexact thought is error ' ; but he will recall that, in making it, I was criticizing Eddington's implication that ' exact thought ' could be conveyed in ' inexact language.' What seems to me ambiguous here is the word ' convey.' Reference to a dictionary shows that, when the object to be conveyed is an idea or meaning, ' convey ' is equivalent to ' communicate ' ; and it seems to me evident that you cannot communicate something with exactitude when the medium you employ—in this case, language—is admitted to be inexact. I would push this further. For what, in the case of language, do we mean by ' inexact '? Language can presumably be inadequate in many ways, according to the purpose for which you intend to employ it ; and language admittedly can have more purposes than one. But the primary purpose of language—and this is the purpose in which a thinker such as Eddington is clearly most interested—is to express thought. But if such language is inadequate, it cannot adequately express it.

Again, if it is true, as Eddington suggests, both that the scientist's aim is to express thought, and that, in spite of the handicap of having to employ ' inexact language,' he does actually succeed in getting this across—*i.e.*, in ' awakening in the mind of the reader the thought which he wishes to convey '—then, assuming that the process of ' awakening ' is identical with comprehension, it is clear that he has done exactly what he intended to do. It follows that if such language is still to be termed ' inexact,' the inexactitudes must refer to something distinct from its capacity to express thought. What this something is, I confess to be unable to say.

I think, too, that Mr. Woolley reads into my argument an assumption about the nature of scientific thinking which it does not contain. My object, whether misguided or not, was to show that Eddington's statement was contradictory ; and one of my reasons for supposing it to be so was the implication which it encouraged that all science is error. Mr. Woolley objects to my objection by accusing me of accepting the implication which led me to make it. His next move is to put forward the view that exactness in physics, even where mathematical symbols are concerned, is unattainable ; and he justifies books of ' inexact arguments ' (inexact from the

point of view of the thought or of the language?) on the ground that they provide a ' rough [*i.e.*, not exact] parallel ' to technical arguments published elsewhere. This is to abandon the claim to be ' awakening ' exact thought in the mind of the reader. Nevertheless, he continues to speak of Newton's ' exact law,' to which the ' law of gravitation observed in nature ' approaches ' within certain limits ' (I doubt if this reference to two ' laws ' is a very successful ' simplification ' with which to ' drive home ' the argument) ; of a statement about the surface of Sirius as ' inexact but correct ' ; and finally of language as an ' inexact method ' of ' provoking ' the ' correct attitude.'

Such statements do not seem to me too happy. In what way, we ask, is Newton's law ' exact ' (we suspect that ' exact ' here is equivalent to ' tidy ' or, in the mathematical sense, beautiful) ; and what is the criterion of correctitude as opposed to exactitude? To say, as Mr. Woolley does at the beginning, that physicists ' commonly arouse ideas in each other's minds by employing inexact terms,' is very likely true (it is certainly true of others) as a description of their workaday behaviour ; but are we to suppose that, in the last resort, they are satisfied with such rough approximations, and is ' what is commonly done ' the ultimate standard by which they seek to regulate their behaviour? Finally, are we to trust so delicate an operation as the tracing of the ' dividing line ' between inexactitude and error to the most nebulous—and I should have thought unscientific—of all criteria, common sense? All this, we are tempted to feel, may be very good pragmatism, but it is not what we mean by the method of exact science.

But pragmatism is only an attempt to state philosophically something which belongs to the essence of all scientific thinking. And I believe that some of the oddities to which we have referred would be removed if it were made clear that scientific thinking is by nature hypothetical. To say this is not to belittle science. On the contrary, it is to render its method intelligible. Otherwise, we have no alternative but to resign ourselves to the ambiguities to which we have drawn attention.

E. W. F. Tomlin.

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

GISSING AND THE ENGLISH NOVEL

STORIES AND SKETCHES, by George Gissing (Michael Joseph, 7/6).

These stories, which mistaken piety must have induced Mr. A. C. Gissing to publish, will unfortunately persuade no one to read George Gissing who is not already interested in him. They exhibit chiefly his weaknesses and give no indication of his virtues. This is nothing like as interesting a volume of stories as the better of his other two collections, *The House of Cobwebs*, which ought by now to have been put into one of the pocket libraries together with the interesting long ' Introductory Survey ' Thomas Seccombe wrote for the 1906 edition. But if this new volume had persuaded reviewers to look up Gissing's novels, re-estimate his achievement, and demand for *New Grub Street* recognition as a classic, its publication would have been justified. There have been no such signs of a reviewer's conscience. It is odd that the Gissing vogue—subsequent to the Meredith vogue and much less widespread—has faded even out of literary history.

This is discouraging, but let us disinter Gissing nevertheless. He wrote twenty-two long novels but only one that posterity would want to read, two books of reminiscence (one the extremely popular *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*), two (now three) volumes of short stories, and the best existing critical introduction to Dickens, in twenty-six years of authorship (he died in 1903, aged only forty-six). He has already received adequate biographical and critical attention in *George Gissing : A Critical Study* by Frank Swinnerton, a capital piece of work which looks like remaining the last profitable word on Gissing as a man and a writer. [Nevertheless academic theses have since been excogitated on the same subject in English, German and American].

Gissing's life and temperament, with the problems that they raise, are the key to both his many failures and his single success as an artist. He made a false start in life, it is true (a blasted academic career, a spell in prison, a spell in America, an impossible marriage), but on the literary side his sending a copy of his first novel (*Workers of the Dawn*, 1880) to Frederick Harrison resulted

much like Crabbe's application to Burke. Harrison recommended Gissing to Lord Morley, then editor of *The Pall Mall Gazette*, and engaged Gissing as classical tutor to his two elder sons, also helping him to get other pupils. He was thus, with the *entrée* to the *P.M.G.* and as many pupils as he could teach, provided for congenially enough—that is, congenially enough for any other man of letters. But his unfortunate idea of what was suitable for the possessor of literary genius interfered with Harrison's benevolent arrangements. He refused to write more than one sketch for the *P.M.G.* on the grounds that journalism was degrading work for an artist, and though Mr. Austin Harrison says that from 1882 onwards Gissing had a living income from teaching which he could increase at will, he continued to live, if not actually in cellars and garrets on one meal a day as before, at least in near poverty, because, says Mr. H. G. Wells, ' he grudged every moment taken by teaching from his literary purpose, and so taught as little as he could.' The interesting point here is not Gissing's romantic conception of what is due to genius, but that he continued to describe himself as the starving and unrecognized martyr of letters ; he was for long neither well-to-do nor famous, but Mr. Austin Harrison characterizes his accounts of his ' continued struggles with abject poverty ' as ' fiction of fiction.' Gissing apparently needed that fiction to support his self-esteem, his belief in his own genius, for actually he must have been well aware, like his wretched Edwin Reardon, that he had written mostly what was unworthy of his best abilities. He had to explain his failure by blaming material circumstances ; and though his output was really enormous we find him in *Ryecroft*, in the year of his death, picturing himself as the writer obliged to earn his living uncongenially so that he could allow himself, ah but how rarely, the luxury of writing a novel at intervals of many years, and thus was his genius blighted. The facts, as we have seen, were otherwise.

It was not lack of time or means that hampered him, nor yet his unhappy temperament. The latter was perhaps his chief asset, since it produced an absolutely personal way of responding to life and his fellow-men, and when a measure of ultimate success came to (as they say) ' mellow ' him the results on his work, as seen in *Ryecroft*, were deplorable. It is instructive to compare the benevolent portrait in *Ryecroft* of the writer N., the successful

author and good mixer, with the earlier study of the same type, Jasper Milvain, in *New Grub Street* (when any nineteenth-century novelist names a character Jasper I think we may safely conclude that that character is intended to be the villain). Apart from his temperament all the other qualities he brought to his novels—his scholarship, his bookishness, his enlightened interest in all the leading topics of his day (religious reform, politics, education, emancipation of woman, ethics, science, sociology . . .)—bear witness to his being an exceptionally cultivated man and exceptionally alive in his age, yet apart from *New Grub Street* how those novels date, how unreadable they now are! [It is thus that I seem to hear the literary critic of *Scrutiny*, Vol. L, describing the novels of Mr. Aldous Huxley, whom Gissing in some respects resembles]. But there was no interaction between his subject-matter and his sensibility, so the exhibition of life he gives us seems arbitrarily blighted by a novelist always functioning below par as it were ; Mr. Swinnerton, to account for his unpopularity, says ' he was condemned by novel-readers as a writer who whimpered at life.' But when he took as the subject of a novel his most vital interest—the problem of how to live as a man of letters, the literary world being what it is,[1] without sacrificing your integrity

[1]It seems to have begun to be as we know it in Gissing's time. Jasper Milvain differs from Alroy Kear (*Cakes and Ale*) only in being a simpler psychological study. Reviewing was much the same as now: ' The book met with rather severe treatment in critical columns ; it could scarcely be ignored (the safest mode of attack when one's author has no expectant public) . . . ' ' " The struggle for existence among books is nowadays as severe as among men. If a writer has friends connected with the press, it is the plain duty of those friends to do their utmost to help him. What matter if they exaggerate, or even lie? The simple, sober truth has no chance whatever of being listened to, and it's only by volume of shouting that the ear of the public is held." ' Conditions governing material success were taking modern shape: ' "Literature nowadays is a trade. Putting aside men of genius, who may succeed by mere cosmic force, your successful man of letters is your skilful tradesman . . . To have money is becoming of more and more importance in a literary career ; principally because to have money

of purpose—he produced his one permanent contribution to the English novel. I think it can be shown to be a major contribution. The subject was both inside and outside him. The best way to suggest his achievement is to say that put beside the other best treatments of the same subject—Maugham's *Cakes and Ale* and the many fine short stories on aspects of the literary life by Henry James which should be read as a whole—Gissing's *New Grub Street* is quite different, equally serious and equally successful as a piece of art.

The Gissing temperament suitably colours the book, which, like *Cakes and Ale*, is consistently written in one tone, here an irony weighted with disgust. This strikes one as being the right outlook on the literary world ('such things were enough to make all literature appear a morbid excrescence upon human life,' the heroine reflects at one point), if less suited to life in general. However, life in general is here seen from the point of view of the slenderly talented Reardon who wants to support his family by his pen and yet at the same time write only novels and essays worthy of himself. We see him go under, weighed down by a wife who thinks social and material success the due of her beauty, by his lack of influential friends, most of all by his choosing to abide by the values of Dr. Johnson in an age where the policy of Alroy Kear had become requisite for success. We see his acquaintance Jasper Milvain deliberately choosing literature as a profitable field for his unliterary talents and ending up more successful than even he had dared expect, his marriage with Reardon's widow (become an heiress) symbolically ending the story. Delicacy and fineness, the strongly noble and the devotedly disinterested elements in human nature, are not ignored or denied, they are presented with complete success—this is a measure of Gissing's total success here—in the persons of Marian Yule, whom Milvain jilts and leaves to wretchedness, and Reardon's friend Biffen who is driven to remove himself from a world that has no use for his devoted labours. Such are shown doomed to misery and failure. The old-style man of letters, part hack and part stiff-necked enthusiast, is

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is to have friends. Year by year, such influence grows of more account . . . Men won't succeed in literature that they may get into society, but will get into society that they may succeed in literature.'' '

skilfully contrasted (Alfred Yule) with the new-style man of straw (Whelpdale) successful because pliant in his complete lack of any literary conscience. There are many masterly studies of the emotions and conduct peculiar to those who live by literature and journalism, and in spite of a certain stiffness of style from which Gissing was never for long free the smallest touches are effective. The subject seems likely to remain of permanent interest and Gissing has raised crucial problems. The central problem, one ultimately of values, is put by Reardon to his wife thus:

> ' " A year after I have published my last book, I shall be practically forgotten . . . And yet, of course it isn't only for the sake of reputation that one tries to do uncommon work. There's the shrinking from conscious insincerity of workmanship which most writers nowadays seem never to feel. " It's good enough for the market " ; that satisfies them. And perhaps they are justified. I can't pretend that I rule my life by absolute ideals ; I admit that everything is relative. There is no such thing as goodness or badness, in the absolute sense, of course. Perhaps I am absurdly inconsistent when—though knowing my work can't be first-rate—I strive to make it as good as possible. I don't say this in irony, Amy ; I really meant it. It may very well be that I am just as foolish as the people I ridicule for moral and religious superstition. This habit of mine is superstitious. How well I can imagine the answer of some popular novelist if he heard me speak scornfully of his books. " My dear fellow," he might say, " do you suppose I am not aware that my books are rubbish? I know it just as well as you do. But my vocation is to live comfortably. I have a luxurious house, a wife and children who are happy and grateful to me for their happiness. If you choose to live in a garret, and, what's worse, make your wife and children share it with you, that's your concern." '

Whether Milvain could have existed at that or any time has, by way of objection, been doubted, but Seccombe, who was in a position to speak with authority, says ' Jasper Milvain is, to my thinking, a perfectly fair portrait of an ambitious publicist or journalist of the day—destined by determination, skill, energy and social ambition to become an editor of a successful journal or review, and to lead the life of central London.'

The original temper that the novel manifests is notable in every detail, *e.g.*,

> ' Alfred Yule had made a recognizable name among the critical writers of the day ; seeing him in the title-lists of a periodical, most people knew what to expect, but not a few forebore the cutting open of the pages he occupied.'

' They had had three children ; all were happily buried.'

> ' " . . . but I was never snobbish. I care very little about titles ; what I look to is intellectual distinction."
> " Combined with financial success.'
> " Why, that is what distinction means." '

> ' Amy now looked her years to the full, but her type of beauty, as you know, was independent of youthfulness. You saw that at forty, at fifty, she would be one of the stateliest of dames. When she bent her head towards the person with whom she spoke, it was an act of queenly favour. Her words were uttered with just enough deliberation to give them the value of an opinion ; she smiled with a delicious shade of irony ; her glance intimated that nothing could be too subtle for her understanding.'

The last example is strikingly in the modern manner, and Gissing's best work, *New Grub Street* almost entirely, seems contemporary with us rather than with Meredith.

As a general thing, the same outlook characterizes Gissing's other novels, but elsewhere it seems merely depressed and therefore depressing. Poor Gissing was sliding down the hill which Dickens and his robust contemporaries had climbed in such high spirits. Seccombe explains it well: ' In the old race, of which Dickens and Thackeray were representative, a successful determination to rise upon the broad back of popularity coincided with a growing conviction that evil in the real world was steadily diminishing . . . In Gissing the misery inherent in the sharp contrasts of modern life was a far more deeply ingrained conviction. He cared little for the remedial aspect of the question. His idea was to analyse this misery as an artist and to express it to the world. One of the most impressive elements in the resulting novels is the witness they bear to prolonged and intense suffering, the suffering of a proud, reserved and oversensitive mind brought into constant contact with the coarse and brutal facts of life. The creator of Mr. Biffen suffers

all the torture of the fastidious, the delicately honourable, the scrupulously high-minded in daily contact with persons of blunt feelings, low ideals and base instincts.' Outside *New Grub Street* however you too often feel that the provocation is inadequate to the suffering. Gissing's susceptibilities are not all equally respectable and in some cases he seems only a querulous old maid, too easily provoked on such subjects as bad cooking, slovenly lodgings, ungenteel personal habits and lack of secondary school education. But in *New Grub Street*, just as what is elsewhere merely bookishness becomes transfused into a passionate concern for the state of literature, so his other minor feelings have turned into positive values, and he produced the one important novel in his long list. It occurs less than half-way down, so its unique success is not a matter of maturity or technical development.

The difference between its technical efficiency and the incompetence of the rest is startling too. It might have been written by a Frenchman rather than an Englishman of those days, and Gissing's interest in and admiration for the nineteenth-century Russian and French novelists is significant. He was never able to make use of them as consistently as did Henry James or Conrad, but he was conscious that the English novel tradition he had inherited would not do and he was groping for help where it seemed to offer. [He later met Meredith and must have studied *The Egoist* with a certain degree of profit. Literary historians ought to inspect *Our Friend the Charlatan* (1901) which obviously was conceived and treated in the spirit of *The Egoist* though without ceasing to be Gissing's]. Gissing is an example of how disastrous it may be for a writer whose talent is not of the first order to be born into a bad tradition. A score and more of novels painfully sweated out of his system, the exceptional system of an exceptionally intelligent and well-educated and devoted writer, and only one that amounted to something. The absence of what now enables anyone in Bloomsbury to write a readable novel made Gissing's efforts mostly futile. Mr. Swinnerton justly talks of ' the wreckage of the Victorian tradition by which it [Gissing's best work] is now encumbered.' But in *New Grub Street* Gissing not only solved, if only temporarily, his own problems, he helped all later writers to solve theirs, and the recognition this novel at one time received from literary men is significant. It is probably an ancestor of the novel of our time.

It is an important link in the line of novels from Jane Austen's

to the present which an adult can read at his utmost stretch—as attentively, that is, as good poetry demands to be read—instead of having to make allowances for its being only a novel or written for a certain public or a certain purpose. In the nineteenth century, to take the high lights, Jane Austen, *Wuthering Heights, Middlemarch, The Egoist, New Grub Street* connect the best eighteenth century tradition with the serious twentieth century tradition that Henry James, Conrad, Lawrence, Forster, Joyce and Mrs. Woolf have built up. There are inferior novels (*e.g., The Way of All Flesh*) in this tradition as well as good ones, and very minor successes (like Howard Sturgis's *Belchamber*) as well as major contributions, but they are all immediately recognizable as novels, distinct from what we may more usefully call fiction. It is time the history of the English novel was rewritten from the point of view of the twentieth century (it is always seen from the point of view of the mid-nineteenth), just as has been done for the history of English poetry. The student would undoubtedly be glad to be allowed to reorganize his approach and revise the list of novels he has to accept as worth attention ; it would be a matter chiefly of leaving out but also of substitution, for the list consists only of conventional values. I don't know who will dare touch off the first charge to blow up those academic values. Mr. Forster once made an attempt on Scott and the response in the academic world was most interesting ; the subsequent Scott centenary was a rally of the good men and true to batten down the hatches on Mr. Forster's wholesome efforts to have that reputation reconsidered. What is commonly accepted as the central tradition is most easily examined in the middling practitioner—such as Trollope or Charles Reade. *The Cloister and the Hearth* is a puerile example of what *Esmond* is a highly accomplished form of, but both are undeserving of serious attention and both are on the educational syllabus, at different ends ; though I never knew anyone but the old-fashioned kind of schoolmaster who could bear the former, and the latter's ventriloquial waxworks in period costume (prick them and do they not bleed red paint) are a direct ancestor of Sir Hugh Walpole's own great trilogy which will in time, who can doubt, get on the list too. It is time also that we sorted out the novels which form or enrich the real tradition of the English novel from those which (like Trollope's and Wells's) are rather contributions to the literary history of their time and to be read as material for the sociologist,

from those which (like Scott's and R.L.S.'s and George Moore's) perpetrate or perpetuate bogus traditions, from those which (like Charlotte Brontë's) are the ill-used vehicles for expressing a point of view or as in other novelists' hands (Aldous Huxley's), ideas ; and from all the other kinds. As one step towards this desirable scheme I suggest that *New Grub Street* be made generally available by reissuing it in ' Everyman ' or ' The World's Classics ' editions. Sir Humphrey Milford has already ventured to make some surprising additions to the world's classic novels on his own responsibility (Constance Holmes for instance) and Messrs. Dent have similarly helped Galsworthy and Priestley to get on everyman's list of great novels, so they might do something for Gissing whose best novel will soon be due for a half-centenary.

Q. D. Leavis.

'FEMINA VIE-HEUREUSE' PLEASE NOTE

I'M NOT COMPLAINING, by Ruth Adam (Chapman and Hall, 7/6).

It is pleasant to be able to recommend a novel by a woman novelist in strong terms. Though Mrs. Woolf has declared it to be a popular fallacy, the Jane Austen—Emily Brontë—George Eliot circle still defies addition. These women novelists represent female triumph in the realm of character at least as much as of art—I mean the author's character. It is in terms of deficiency in character that Mrs. Woolf's degeneration and Katharine Mansfield's deficiency as artists are to be explained. The Feminist movement ought to have helped things, you feel, but looking before and after you cannot help noticing that, to take two women of about the same kind of ability, a feminine Mrs. Gaskell has the advantage of a feminist Winifred Holtby and not conversely. What the Feminist movement seems to have done in the literary camp is to set up an ideal, an ideal of the brilliant emancipated woman of wit, intellect and literary genius. No doubt it was inspired by George Meredith's novels. As commonly found, incarnated in a Rebecca West (not Ibsen's) or an Ethel Mannin, it seems it must be an inherently trashy ideal. But there is another kind of feminism, represented by Charlotte Brontë most notably. She was considerably more gifted in character than literary ability, and the abiding interest her novels have is the outlook—the peculiar angle on life and the

personal sense of values—of the author's mouthpiece, Lucy Snow or Jane Eyre.

Miss Adam is evidently such another, though she is as evidently a feminist too in the other way—she conveys powerfully an impression that a man is generally a pitiful object. *I'm Not Complaining* ought to get a literary prize though you can be sure it won't ; it has not the qualities that appeal to prize-awarding committees. It is about the Elementary school in a depressed district (no doubt typical enough in these hard times), presented through the personality of a mistress in a Junior and Infant school. The facts are convincing in themselves as they are narrated, though anyone with a friend or two in the profession, or who has been through an Elementary school not too long ago, is likely to be familiar with most of them already. Miss Adam's feat is not merely to convey these facts convincingly and unforgettably, but to have made them into the material of art. The nits in the children's hair, the rude words chalked on the walls, the perpetual petty thieving, the troublesome milk bottles, the eternal registers, are used not as facts to elicit laughter or political action but collectively to build up the atmosphere of a complete culture. Being art it does not demand any such simple response as indignation. Contributors to *New Writing* might profitably study Miss Adam's method, and admirers of the *New Writing* reportage might be stimulated by *I'm Not Complaining* to realize that the *New Writing* stories are almost uniformly uninteresting, not literature, and in their lack of literary ability not even convincing as fact. Miss Adam is steeped in the details of her culture and her novel yields more at every reading.

She has a talent for writing, unlike poor Charlotte. Without any gestures or pretensions she rolls up her sleeves and gets right down to it with the opening sentence. Everyone I have shown the novel to has agreed that you only have to read the first page to realize that here is a unique good thing. Miss Adam has a style characterized not only by condensation, simplicity and objectivity, but by a tone which like Charlotte's is not sympathetic. It is even a bit grim, for underlying it is always an implied criticism. It is the attitude of an uncompromisingly intelligent woman, contemptuous of the unreal—sentimentality, idealism and any kind of emotional silliness. Here is the headmistress: ' She believed that most coughs and all sniffs could be controlled by the child

with a full sense of responsibility towards the school and towards its fellow-scholars.' What she despises most is sentimentality applied to education. For instance, there is the literature professor's wife who greets her (this is really so true to life as to be hardly bearable) with ' You musn't mind us. We're very unconventional ' and presently we get: ' I asked where their child was, and she said he was at school. It was a very enlightened co-educational boarding-school, she hastened to add, where there was no nonsense about segregating the sexes and thus putting impure thoughts into the children's minds. I said that we didn't have any nonsense about segregating the sexes at our school either, but that, so far as we could judge, the impure thoughts were in their minds all ready-made.' In its context, following the picture of children who have not come from sheltered homes, this doesn't read like the *Punch* or E. M. Delafield humour it may here suggest. It conveys a common-sense criticism of impractical theory from someone qualified to hold an opinion because she spends her best energies trying to impose the elements of civilization on children to many of whom, because of their home environment, theft and lies and immorality come as naturally as dirty heads and malnutrition. On fifty-six children at once. Homer Lane worked in an isolated community I believe, and even our expensive advanced boarding-schools are said to complain that their children show a relapse after every vacation. Miss Adam is able in the same style to treat finer and subtler issues, which is a proof that there is nothing superficial about her attitudes. For example:

> ' After dinner she came in very shyly and looking very scared and laid a note on my desk . . . They always have a pathetic belief, that nothing will shake, that an actual letter, written by a parent's hand, has a world-compelling power over any dictum of authority from the laws of the Education Committee downwards. Sometimes they even infect parents with their dazzling faith. Often, between the lines of the ill-written and usually threatening scraps, you can see a mental picture of the unhappy child, creeping into the fancied security of its home, out of the merciless machine of the State, begging for help—so sure that Father or Mother has only to put stubby pencil to dirty paper for God himself to climb down off His perch and let Tommy or Betty go to the lavatory when they want, if you don't mind, teacher . . . '

I have tended to talk about the book as though Miss Adam were voicing it. Actually these are the sentiments of Madge Brigson, who is carefully built up as a character and a personality ; and the novel anyway is too well constructed for us to forget that we are reading a piece of art and not a pamphlet. Nevertheless Miss Adam must be credited with sponsoring her views, though it is sometimes hazardous to decide which way the irony is meant to cut. For an irony calling so little attention to itself that it might often be overlooked is a characteristic of Miss Adam's method (' She was one of our very few respectable children. Her father was a warder in the local jail.'). No novelist has wrung more drama out of the richest scenes in history than Miss Adam elicits from Inspectors' visits, abusive parents, undisciplined Night School, demonstrations of unemployed, dishonest caretakers and staff conflicts.

To the creations of art Madge Brigson is an impressive contribution. She makes feminism respectable if not interesting. Her character is of high calibre, like Jane Eyre's. She listens to the training-college professor mouthing conventional enlightenment and reflects devastatingly ' He was a silly man,' to the religion-bitten social reformer and says ' I thought he was a sentimental old fool,' to the Left reporter who babbles ' I think school ought to be such a happy place that they don't need any Attendance Officer to dragoon them into going ' and comments ' I had talked that sort of stuff myself at college, but I thought he ought to have got over it at his age . . . we soon disposed of him.' You believe her.

The environment in which traffic-accidents thin out the children already blighted by slums and too large families is artfully set off by a background of the County busy cherishing horses and cats, nursing the weakly puppy of the litter and marvelling how much dogs *know*. Animal non-lovers (not necessarily identical with child-lovers) will find Miss Brigson's sense of proportion cheering. Its importance for a wider category of people who cannot join up with any existing herd is that her enlightenment is apparently unattached to politics of any shade, her social criticism is not from a *parti pris*. She is careful to see that responsibility for the state of things she witnesses is not put in the wrong place: slum parents are merely incompetent not brutal, tenement dwellers who stand callously on nice points of morality will show Christian charity in other respects, and so on. No haphazard indignation,

no cheap irony and no caricature of types or classes invites a stock response. Emotional scenes and situations are deflated and analysed as they occur. We are not allowed any easy outlet for the blend of distress, disgust and exasperation that her themes elicit. Miss Adam, that is, has both an artistic and a moral conscience, whereas what is called a social conscience is nowadays made an excuse for the absence in writers of either. Yet I cannot see that anything but a social conscience could have prompted her to undertake her novel, and it affects me as being likely to awaken a social conscience in people who would remain unmoved by all the recommendations of the Left Book Club. What does Miss Adam want us to blame? There is of course the Government, and Madge Brigson reflects that better management of depressed districts would obviously be desirable (p. 114). But she cannot help looking deeper:

> 'Squalor did not frighten me. When you live so close to it, and are paid to fight it, it is not terrifying—merely a tiresome and tireless adversary. But somewhere beneath it all was a live, burning thread that ran through these human miseries that was not just mismanagement,' nor stupidity, nor a faulty social system, but something living, primitive, terrible—something I dare not look in the face. A hundred nauseating images seemed to rise up in my mind—all somehow connected . . . '

Hence her lack of enthusiasm for her young communist colleague—'extremely earnest. She was given to causes.' Madge Brigson distrusts the effect of causes on people. She knows that only a part of what she is fighting can be altered by legislation or doctrinaire revolution, though you gather she is willing to try anything that offers in those lines. Common sense often seems to sensitive people no more than the most complacent form of stupidity, but Miss Adam's variety of common sense is the means of exposing some of the more plausible and pernicious kinds of stupidity.

Apart from Dickens' admirable satires on the old system in *Hard Times* and *Our Mutual Friend*, the only account of the modern state school in literature comparable with Miss Adam's is a chapter ('The Man's World') in *The Rainbow*. We may be sure that Lawrence would have liked her book. It is to his essay *Education of the People* that we may profitably turn on laying down *I'm Not Complaining*.

Q. D. Leavis.

KAFKA'S LIFE

MAX BROD : Franz Kafka. Eine Biographie (Erinnerungen und Dokumente). Prag H. Mercy Sohn, 1937.

Franz Kafka's work seems at first sight almost timeless and placeless. It hovers in a rarefied atmosphere of metaphysical horror. In his whole work there is not a single allusion to Bohemia except the scene in St. Vitus Cathedral in the *Trial*, nor anything which would show any interest in the problems which moved the many contemporary German writers who came from Prague. Rilke at least in his early poems and stories is preoccupied with the fascination of his home town and country, Franz Werfel, Max Brod, Gustav Meyrinck and others of less importance seem to think of little else than the Jewish question and the relation of Germans and Czechs. Kafka, though also a German Jew from Prague, seems a complete exception in his almost inhuman passion for the last things of man : his exclusive interest in the mystery and darkness of human life, the guilt of man, his utter helplessness in the face of crushing fate. Max Brod's first full-length biography of his dead friend seems to have been written to counteract this first impression and to demonstrate the intimate relation between the work and the personality and fate of its author.

The outward life of Kafka was most uneventful : he was born in Prague in 1893 as the son of a Jewish wholesale dealer : he studied at the German University, took his doctor's degree in Law in 1906, and became a clerk in the Workers' Accidence Insurance Institute. In 1917 he had the first hæmorrhage which signalized the beginning of his fatal illness. He retired from his work on a tiny pension, lived first in the Bohemian country and then had to seek help in different homes in the Tatras and near Vienna, where he died at Kierlin in 1924 as a victim of laryngeal tuberculosis. His life as a writer began comparatively late. An early paper which is rescued by Brod from the files of a Prague daily, on an aeroplane display at Brescia which Kafka saw in 1909, shows little more than a future reporter's gift of acute observation. Only in 1912 the story *Das Urteil* was written and the unfinished rather Dickensian novel *America* was drawn up. Most of the great stories followed soon afterwards and his most mature novel *The Trial* was begun in 1914. The last, un-

finished novel *The Castle* was begun in 1922. Kafka leaped into maturity almost at a bound and even Brod who knew him intimately for many years scarcely hints at any actual evolution of his mind. The main outlines of his spiritual make-up hardened very early and were not much changed by any experiences. Brod shows convincingly how Kafka felt the overwhelming strength of family ties. The domineering personality of his robust and successful father was the decisive influence on his life. Brod attempts the obvious psycho-analytical explanation which finds support in many diaries and letters of Kafka himself. Kafka felt the pressure of the father's personality even as a barrier to marriage and interpreted his own life as a series of attempts to escape this influence. He himself says that he lost ' all self-confidence ' and took in exchange only an ' immense sense of guilt.' Brod points to the rôle a mysterious authority plays in his two great novels *The Trial* and *The Castle* and quotes at length a painful letter Kafka wrote to his father accusing him of the failure of his life. Kafka, however, did not feel only the wall between father and son. He suffered acutely from the restrictions his official job imposed on his time and mental freshness. He took the work because he had the idea that his bread should not have anything to do with literature. But his dull job became to him a nightmare of oppression, the occasion of innumerable complaints and delays in his work. But again his work in the office provided one of the standing topics of his novels: the workings or rather non-workings of a cumbrous bureaucratic machine was the mainspring of whatever action there is in his two novels. In all Kafka's books there is no overt mention of the Jewish problem. Kafka for a long time in opposition to the Zionist Brod denied its urgency and even reality. He had even curious Teutonic leanings for some time, though he showed some sympathetic interest in the Czech cause even before the war. But later the Jewish problem seems to have absorbed him almost as completely as Brod. He learned Hebrew and studied Yiddish literature, he took an intense interest in Jewish traditions and beliefs. Brod tries to show that much of Kafka's symbolism is comprehensible only against this background. *The Castle* especially, where the geometer K arrives at a village inhabited by hostile peasants and is received everywhere with distrust and hostility, can be interpreted almost as an allegory

of the pathetic attempt of the Jew to become assimilated to German civilization. But Brod admits that this point must not be pressed too far. Actually the allegory is by no means simple: the references to man's strangeness in this world obviously predominate and even absorb the Jewish question. Brod tries to show that the philosophy of Kafka has been misinterpreted when it is understood merely as a philosophy of utter despair. He shows that Kafka had no affinities and no sympathies with Poe, Baudelaire or any decadents. His literary loves were such normal and comparatively simple authors as Stifter or Hebel, Fontane or Hesse. There are no affinities in Kafka with the surrealists who claim him to-day: he had nothing of their pure passivity. Kafka is to Brod rather a secular saint: kin to Job, at the most, who rebels against the Lord for a time without doubting his might and justice. Kafka believed in truth and justice though he saw clearly the evil comedy of the world. His books are not primarily morbid. He does not reject life. He loves life, he admires everything good and natural, simple and fresh, but he realizes that this good life is not for him. Kafka does not quarrel with God, but only with himself. He believes in the existence of an Absolute, but he knows that it is immensely difficult to reach it. We are too weak, Kafka, the modern man and especially the modern Jew is too weak, for the act of faith and trust required. Hence also came Kafka's extravagant though slightly ironic admiration for the 'ordinary man' who is able to marry and to bring up his children. Here we feel one of the roots of Kafka's painful and awkward love-affairs which only in his last love to a young Polish Jewess found a normal fulfilment. Brod never tires of stressing a core of certainty and self-assurance in Kafka, a fundamental belief in his genius and the permanence of his work which gave to Brod the moral justification to publish the work of his friend even though he asked him to have it destroyed. This striving for a normal life which succeeded at the last but was deprived by illness and death from its fruition in Kafka's work is the one leading motive of Brod's biography. One cannot help suspecting that Brod's sincere admiration for Kafka and his preoccupation with a Jewish philosophy have sometimes exaggerated some sides of Kafka's complex character. But it is difficult to dispute Brod's interpretation, since it is based on a life-long friendship and on access to materials from diaries,

letters and unpublished fragments which are only quoted incompletely in the book. Brod's book is not a formal biography, but rather in accordance with the subtitle a book of reminiscences and documents with connecting reflections. It adds, however, enormously to our information on Kafka and increases the indebtedness every admirer of his work must feel towards Brod for his thirty years' long service to his friend.

R. Wellek.

LEFT-WING ALLEGORIES

THE WILD GOOSE CHASE, by Rex Warner (Boriswood, 8/6).
JOURNEY TO THE BORDER, by Edward Upward (Hogarth, 7/6).

Both these novels of left-wing propaganda are directed, I suppose, at the bourgeois intellectual, but they differ widely in scope and method. Mr. Upward sets out to depict ' the predicament of the more intelligent members of the middle class in England to-day ' (*v.* blurb) through the mind of a dissatisfied tutor in a country house. Mr. Warner is much more ambitious: to say that he has attempted a Marxist *Pilgrim's Progress* is to give only the faintest notion of his pretentiousness, and none at all of his all-embracing sensationalism and sentimentality. The setting of the greater part of the book is a fascist state conceived partly on the lines of *The Castle* and *The Trial* (for instance, the laughing policemen), partly in the manner of an Auden-Isherwood play, with the familiar stock imagery of frontiers and marshes, military strategy and rugger. The city, which derives its wealth from the oppressed peasants of the country, is the authentic Wellsian Brave New World as reproduced in schoolboy thrillers, with appropriate mechanical marvels and deadly weapons. Of course, all this is symbolic and satirical, and almost anything can be somehow justified in the name of surrealism, but the fact remains that, as one reviewer innocently remarked, if you disregard the allegory the book can be read as a successful thriller. Perhaps Mr. Warner had his eye on the Junior Left Book Club. It can hardly be supposed that he is deliberately writing down to the masses, for he draws essentially on the values of Public School communism and Bloomsbury enlightenment. George, the hero,

organizes the peasants' revolt and ends as almost the only loyal revolutionary general ; his brothers, Rudolph the hearty and David the æsthete, err greatly, but repent in time to support him on the platform at the final triumphal mass-meeting. The traitors among the leaders are both workers—a moderate and an extremist.

But there are other satisfactions besides sheer melodrama for the not-too-critical reader, secure in the virtuous assurance that he is tackling serious political satire. The fascist town has a sort of university, a haunt of fascinating vice where professors draw up a calculus of sensation and perform unspeakable experiments upon political prisoners, while all the students and teachers are compulsorily bisexual. This, we gather, illustrates the shocking decadence of the bourgeoisie as contrasted with the natural decency of the workers. But it is significant that George is somehow above the morality of the workers: *his* promiscuity is recounted with uncritical admiration as part of the Full Life. And, inevitably, the authority of Lawrence is invoked here, at any rate implicitly, for George's love affairs are described in a style that hovers between a twopenny novelette and a particularly nauseating imitation of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. One can only imagine what would have been Lawrence's own comment on this kind of double morality.

The university stands for bourgeois culture, which is identified with the most trivial and futile pursuits. A literary conversation between David and the headmaster's secretary is presented as a satirical picture of the non-Marxist cultivated world, but it might equally well be a *Punch* lampoon on Bloomsbury. Mr. Warner evidently takes sides with the popular press against the highbrow. But isn't it precisely the group of left-wing writers to which he belongs that cultivates poetry full of esoteric jokes and allusions only to be appreciated by those of the group who call each other by their Christian names? When George breaks in with the assertion that his favourite books are Shakespeare, Karl Marx, *Tom Jones* and Isaiah, the point is presumably that only the Public School revolutionary is left as the guardian of the humane tradition. Similarly his lecture on *Othello*, which is received with hysterical laughter, must be intended to show that bourgeois culture has no use for ' the common sense of readers uncorrupted with literary prejudices ' : actually the only ideas in the specimen given are those of respectable academic romanticism. This kind of dishonest

muddle is typical of most of Mr. Warner's satire. Liberal reformers are represented by the President of the Free State of Lagonda. He is not a worker by birth (neither is George) and his democratic reformism ends in the betrayal of his cause and the establishment of a home for stray cats. Here as in other places throughout the book one feels that the vindictive spitefulness of the caricature is more like the satisfaction of personal animus than disinterested indignation. The general satire is not merely directed against institutions and the obviously malicious and anti-social; it is implied throughout that honesty and goodwill are the monopoly of Mr. Warner's group, apart from the workers themselves (and even they cannot always be trusted).

The sentimental symbolism of the wild goose is just a means of rounding off this dubious Pilgrim's Progress with the sanctions of a vague poetic mysticism. On the whole, the reader will not be surprised to find Mr. Warner is a professed enemy of literary criticism. George classes it with 'deliberate love-making . . . pictures of sunsets, money, the police,' as 'things we chiefly despise,' and elsewhere he shows that his attitude approximates closely to that of Dr. Goebbels: 'Words are dug from mines and grow in fields. Critics, but not poets, are at tea tables.'

Mr. Upward, in comparison, is pleasantly earnest and simple-minded. His chief character is conscious of having wasted his life in trivialities and dishonesties—'his life which might have been so full of, bright with, ardent for—what? Oh, wonders: love and knowledge and creation, history, science, poetry, interesting daily work, revolutionary politics, discipline, self-sacrifice, holidays, joy.' At the races with his employer he has a nightmare vision of the modern world, and here again the author has made a superficial use of the more easily accessible parts of Kafka's technique. The tutor's mental struggles culminate in a dialogue with himself which recalls a hire-purchase furniture advertisement. The argument is familiar:

> '. . . in capitalist society there is no future for poetry or for anything worth while. There is no future for anything except tyranny.'
>
> 'Yes, I have learnt that.'
>
> 'Only the workers can save the things you value and love. All that is gentle, generous, lovely, innocent, free, they will

fight to save. And in the end they will win. There will be a time of harshness and bitter struggle, but out of it will come flowers ; splendour and joy will come back to the world. And life will be better than it has ever been yet in the world's history.'

' How soon can I join the workers' movement?'

The reasons for considering this view inadequate by itself have frequently been discussed in *Scrutiny*. For the present purpose it is sufficient to point to the crude journalistic-didactic style and the naïve sentimentality and over-simplification of the allegory as evidence of the lack of real sensitiveness or genuine imaginative insight into the complexities of the modern situation. Even at the level of simple propaganda the book will not stand comparison with, say, the *Mary French* sections of Dos Passos' *The Big Money*.

Neither of these writers can plead the excuse of extreme youth, and yet their emotional and intellectual immaturity has been allowed to pass without comment: no reviewer to my knowledge has made the slightest protest against the intellectual dishonesty and moral vulgarity of *The Wild Goose Chase* or the naïve muddle-headedness of *Journey to the Border*. On the contrary, both books have been praised for their literary as well as their propagandist merit. The decline of critical standards has brought us, it is clear, to a point where the regular critics cannot be relied on to make the simplest and most obvious judgments of taste and morality. Of course, the groups which these authors represent and by whom they are hailed as important writers appear to control most of the reviewing in literary periodicals: they are also, which is more important, practically the only modern literary movement. This only makes it more depressing to see that if you wear the right colours and know the right people you need observe no higher standards than those of the best-selling thriller and the middle-brow novel with a purpose. Mr. Day Lewis, it will be remembered, is on the selection committee of the Book Society. If a revolution leaves the Public School communists in privileged positions (as they seem sure it will) and follows the lines of their writings, it is impossible that the triumphant new culture of the classless society should be anything more than our present intellectual and moral chaos writ large. At least we know what to expect.

R. G. Cox.

THE POET AND HIS READERS

LETTERS FROM ICELAND, by W. H. Auden and Louis MacNeice (Faber and Faber, 9/-).

I CROSSED THE MINCH, by Louis MacNeice (Longmans, 10/6).

THE EARTH COMPELS, by Louis MacNeice (Faber and Faber, 6/-).

MEMORY, AND OTHER POEMS, by Walter de la Mare (Constable, 6/-).

POEMS, by C. H. Peacock (Chatto and Windus, 3/6).

THE CARNIVAL, by Frederic Prokosch (Chatto and Windus, 5/-).

By taking these books in chronological order one can dispose of the two silliest first. Mr. MacNeice says explicitly that his book about the Hebrides is a pot-boiler, but *Letters from Iceland* has more impressive pretensions and has everywhere been hailed as an important work of literature. It contains a fairly polite and sensible letter by Mr. Auden to a host in Iceland (Chap. XIV) which makes some criticisms of the island and suggestions for its future, and Mr. MacNeice is equally sensible on the decline of the crofters and of Gaelic traditions. But we all of us know about Culture and Environment now. The rest of the *Letters* is composed of a collection of quotations from histories dealing with Iceland, a certain amount of pedestrian tourist information, some description and the poetical contributions which set the tone of the whole. Mr. Auden thinks that

> Art, if it doesn't start there, at least ends,
> Whether æsthetics like the thought or not,
> In an attempt to entertain our friends ;
> And our first problem is to realise what
> Peculiar friends the modern artist's got ;
> It's possible a little dose of history
> May help us in unravelling this mystery. (p. 103)

One can only be grateful to Mr. Auden for stating the situation so completely. And while the chaps get on with the blind (p. 104) the common reader must be confident that at it they devote themselves

to assist in the defence
Of the European Tradition and to carry on
The Human Heritage. (p. 246)

There may be people who trust Baldwin still,
Someone may think that Empire wines are nice,
There may be people who hear Tauber twice (p. 57)

indicates by implication the healthy political, social and cultural outlook. If, as Mr. Auden suggests, the Romantics broke away from society and retired into an ivory studio party, it is equally true that our latter day modernists have found it an extraordinary profitable exhibition-stand. A large audience seems ready to sit quiet and watch any activities that the performers happen to be engaged in. Occasionally an amusing diversion is caused by someone at the back shouting

' It's such a pity Wystan never grows up.' (p. 203)

Anyhow Mr. MacNeice has followed the line up on his own at 10 pages less and 1/6 a time more. He provides the same kind of pointlessly minute descriptions of his trip—he tells the reader when he has a drink, Mr. Auden tells him when he goes to the lavatory—more verse interludes, some dull parodies (including a silly one of Lawrence) and a series of inconsequential dialogues between an imaginary tough and an æsthete. The protective irony is less all-embracing than in Mr. Auden's parts of the *Letters*, though he does the irresponsible snob stuff at some length. Twenty-five of the sixty-four pages of *The Earth Compels* are encores. One of these, *On those Islands*, is quite a pleasant meditative verse-description of the kind that Mr. MacNeice has done before, but *Homage to Clichés* and *Eclogue between the Motherless* are in Mr. Auden's cheapest and nastiest manner. Out of the muddled dullness of

Those who ignore disarm. The domestic ambush
The pleated lampshade the defeatist clock
May never be consummated and we may never
Strike on the rock beneath the calm upholstering.
(*Hidden Ice*)

and the dreariness of

Talking of evenings
I can drop my ash on the carpet since my divorce.
Never you marry, my boy . . .
(*Eclogue between the Motherless*)

one is quite pleased to see emerge a belief in

Your hazard, your act of defiance and hymn of hate,
Hatred of hatred, assertion of human values.
(*Eclogue from Iceland*)

but it isn't very convincing in the mouth of a Norse pre-incarnation of a Bloomsbury tough, and one remembers that Mr. Auden thinks that Lord Byron would have liked him, had he known him. Mr. MacNeice has found a public and he will presumably now go on giving them a little sordidness, a little toughness, a little nonsense verse, a little description and a little reminiscence. It's easy money, but one is sorry because there are not many poets writing at the moment whom one wants to read.

Mr. de la Mare's admirers cannot help being disappointed by *Memory*. He long ago gave us the essence of his poetic vision, and here again he merely repeats the well-known themes, reminiscence and foreboding, wistful aspirations and unaffectedly exotic descriptions.

After reading *The Earth Compels* one is relieved to turn to the honest Romanticism of *The Carnival*, but Mr. Prokosch has not developed much since *The Assassins*.

When all impassioned lovers kiss,
When madmen count the stars anew,
When whales in their gigantic bliss
Lie trembling two by two.

outdoes Mr. Roy Campbell, and at least eight lyrics in the volume are almost pure Housman, for example:

Northwards flames Orion's horn,
Westward the Egyptian light.
None to watch us, none to warn
But the blind eternal night.

Mr. Prokosch is less exotic than he was and is more aware of his immediate surroundings, but he still writes with only a small part

of his personality. A critical intellect, not to say a sense of humour, would also have modified

> And so on this windless morning, forgive,
> Lord, my superfluous words and narcissus
> Athletics. Hunger, control, the Eye and the endless
> Longing to love and discern: let these be my power. (*Ode*)

Though the protest is undoubtedly genuine, it is a mere surge of emotion which leaves no definite and lasting impression on the reader. I liked the title poem, however, and *The Castle*, whose last stanza again shows Mr. Prokosch's weakness and his success when he strikes a vivid image:

> I hear their prayers. O what is the answer? What cool
> Idyll will join their arms in the dance, when Aragon
> Is a book? And the nordic fury
> A phrase, or a bronze fountain?

Mr. Peacock has written very little and it is uneven in quality, but he has at his best a personal tone and feeling which is worth attention. I was extremely surprised to find that he had not reprinted *To Maecenas* from *Scrutiny*, September, 1933, which I think his most individual poem. I will quote the opening and the close:

> You, my friend,
> Who are not apt to notice things like these,
> Remarked how well the buds had rallied
> After the spite of an inconstant spring.
> So you and I,
> Who sleep the time of our short tenancy,
> And spoil no dreams as some men do
> With too much thought and too much noticing—
> We sometimes, forced by circumstance, extend
> The scope of our habitual view . . .
> Searched out by the dynamic impetus of things
> We have no meaning—you and I
> Who wonder, as we stare about us, why
> Our hearts are empty and our spirits cold.

The tone of this quiet ironic satire is Mr. Peacock's distinctive characteristic, which one feels equally in the conversational

Excursion and in the more complex *Creed, Poise* and *Release,* where his use of words is modern in a less personal way, for example in

> I would not have life whittled to an hour
> Of sifted essence, and all memories creep
> Round one small orbit while the visual power
> Becomes not means to gain but keep.
> Better to leave all legacy behind
> Than sign acceptance in the terms of sleep.

Mr. Peacock is a serious artist who takes great pains to communicate those experiences that have interested him. His good poems are truly experiences, carefully clarified and ordered, not the mere elaboration of ideas. What chance a little bread has of finding favour when sack is so popular and plentiful one does not know. Nevertheless one hopes that he will write more and develop the qualities which he here briefly suggests to us.

GEOFFREY WALTON.

THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS

FRANCES MARY BUSS : AN EDUCATIONAL PIONEER, by Sara A. Burstall (S.P.C.K., 2/6).

This life of Miss Buss, written as a tribute to work and character that the author feels are insufficiently appreciated, covers little new ground and is too completely reverent in approach to be revealing. Supplemented, however, from a book of memoirs, *A London Girl of the Eighties,* by Mrs. Vivian Hughes, who entered the North London Collegiate School at the age of sixteen, the book gives a fair account of Miss Buss's difficulties and achievements, and indicates the long-lasting effects of her methods. Her initial problem was to convince the general public that girls could benefit from an organized education ; the immediate means to that end seemed to her to lie in obtaining for girls successes in public examinations previously open to boys. The tendency for this means to become an end in itself still exists. A problem within the school was the maintenance of discipline in large classes without the aid of corporal punishment. Miss Buss created a multitude of rules, and a system of signing for offences, such as talking at the wrong

time or place, or ' marching with the wrong foot.' She believed ' that intellectual training effects greater moral improvement in women than it does in men because women's faults of character, on an average, turn more on irrationality and lack of nerve control,' and consequently she valued discipline of all kinds for its own sake, not only the mental discipline traditionally inherent in Latin and Mathematics, but also a rigid conformity to regulations and a meticulous regard for neatness. The excesses of Miss Buss's method have disappeared, but the fetish of neatness and the temptation to foster a silent surface-efficiency persist. Her attitude to health is relevant here. She combatted the prevailing acquiescence in low health by enforcing precautionary measures and beyond that by treating illness like the Erewhonians. ' You *dare* faint!' was her cure for a girl in church. Marks were another means that tended to become an end: they were intended either as a reward for conduct or as an incentive to work, sometimes the distinction was confused—in Drawing, to quote Mrs. Hughes, you got ten marks for not talking. Even the time wasted in the intricacies of marking has not killed equally fatuous practices and there are still schools where every week every girl is given a mark for every subject and every week an average weekly mark for every girl is read out to the assembled school. In the upper forms of the North London Collegiate the marking system was relaxed and it was assumed that the girls would work because they wanted to. Still more than examinations, prize-givings were instituted by Miss Buss for their publicity value ; here again the danger is obvious, and her use of high titles established a precedent that endures after the need for publicity.

Some changes from Miss Buss's original scheme are to be regretted. Miss Burstall mentions the disappearance of men teachers from the senior forms. Afternoon school has gradually been introduced, even into schools belonging to the G.P.D.S.T. which adhere in theory to the old plan ; the demands of examination syllabuses and the shortening of school terms leave less time for other activities.

Miss Buss improved the status of girls' education enormously. In doing this she made certain concessions, but she felt that public recognition must first be won by some such measurable achievement as examination successes, and that for her it would have been too great a risk to leave the birds in the bush.

SYLVIA LEGGE.

THE ACADEMIC MIND ON THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY STUDIES PRESENTED TO SIR HERBERT GRIERSON (Oxford: Milford, 21/-).

Seventeenth Century Studies contains twenty-three essays collected in honour of Sir Herbert Grierson. All but two or three of the authors are university teachers, known as scholars rather than as critics, and the book raises once more the question of the relations of scholarship and criticism. If one feels that Professor Grierson deserved a better book than this it is not because the essays shown any lack of scholarship but because the spirit which informs so many of them is narrowly academic ; it lacks, that is, that sharp sense of relative values which should guide even the most laborious work with the pick and shovel.

The academic spirit is perhaps most noticeable in those essays which rely mainly on information as a means of enforcing an opinion: Professor Bullough's ' Bacon and the Defence of Learning,' Professor Praz's ' Milton and Poussin,' Dr. Tillyard's ' Milton and the English Epic Tradition,' and Professor Pierre Legouis' ' Corneille and Dryden as Dramatic Critics,' amongst others. Here, plainly, are the Right People discussing the Right Things, professor quotes professor, and none of the essays is unsound or wildly daring, and there isn't one which a student of the century might not, at some time, be glad to consult. But, reading these admirably solid exercises, one feels that anybody, given the time, could have written them ; instead of showing the fruitful impact of a living book on an individual sensibility they are blankly impersonal. The claustrophobic feeling which assails the reader—a sense of horizons drawing in—is, I believe, due to the fact that the authors have attempted to *substitute* scholarship for criticism. Dr. Tillyard controverts the common notion of Milton's isolation by showing how widely Milton had read in the literature of his own and the preceding generation, and he relates the successive stages of the plan for an heroic poem to contemporary literature and contemporary events. But the point in issue is really a critical one ; it is a question of the nature of Milton's mind and feelings as they are displayed in his poetry ; and although Dr. Tillyard has written two books in which he gives his own view of the poetry the present

essay shows a curious incomprehension of the necessary subordination of factual studies. 'The notion of isolation,' he says, 'colours Mr. Belloc's recent book . . . And when Mr. Eliot makes Milton responsible for breaking up the Elizabethan synthesis of thought and feeling and for damaging the English language, he may be arguing on similar premisses.' The 'premisses' of Mr. Eliot's 'Note on the Verse of John Milton'[1] are to be found in the verse of John Milton, and at the critical level at which Mr. Eliot's argument is conducted no amount of information about the books Milton had read makes any difference at all. It is much the same with 'Milton and Poussin.' Professor Praz shows that he is aware of the essential characteristics of Milton's verse, but no one who can read *Paradise Lost* is likely to find his elaborate parallel between the English poet and the French painter very enlightening. Poussin modelled his figures and objects in wax and grouped them in a lighted box before painting his later pictures: 'Milton also modelled his verse in wax before working it in English. The wax pattern of Milton was the Latin construction ; he handled so to say the classical flesh of the words before dressing it in English attire.' Milton's latinizing habits are best described without the aid of a strained analogy, and what is most noticeable about such a comparison is its irrelevance. It is academic irrelevance too that one finds in Mr. Lawrence Binyon's 'Note on Milton's Imagery and Rhythm.' Mr. Binyon quotes quite seriously Robert Bridge's opinion that the 'addresses to Vane, Fairfax and Cromwell are properly odes and should be called odes, or at least odic sonnets.'

It is peculiarly appropriate (or if you like peculiarly unfortunate) that Mr. C. S. Lewis's essay on 'Donne and Love Poetry in the Seventeenth Century' should appear in a volume so strongly imbued with the academic spirit. This contribution is worth a more detailed examination. Mr. Lewis begins by stating that the style of Donne's poetry 'is primarily a development of one of the two styles which we find in the work of his immediate predecessors. One of these is the mellifluous, luxurious, "builded rhyme," as in Spenser's *Amoretti*: the other is the abrupt, familiar, and consciously "manly" style in which nearly all Wyatt's lyrics are written.' Both styles are good, but twentieth-century prejudice favours the second. Donne of course is in the Wyatt line, and

[1] *Essays and Studies of the English Association*, 1935.

Mr. Lewis first analyses the manner of his love poems in order to show why they make a special appeal to contemporary taste. Donne's wit, he says, displayed in poems which are ' dramatic,' argumentative, and exacting, ' is not so much the play as the irritability of intellect,' and this is peculiarly congenial to our age, for ' we, like Donne, happen to live at the end of a great period of rich and nobly obvious poetry ' and ' it is natural to want your savoury after your sweets.' Passing lightly over the fact that most of us are unable to scan and are therefore unable to say whether Donne's poetry is rhythmically good or bad,[1] Mr. Lewis proceeds to the substance of the love poems. He remarks that apart from a few poems of simple appetite and a few which celebrate a self-consciously ' virtuous ' love the main theme of the *Songs and Sonets* is ' the love of hatred and the hate of love ' ; the poems are ' monuments, unparalleled outside Catullus, to the close kinship between certain kinds of love and certain kinds of hate.' This too appeals to us, but the appeal is transitory and limited ; for not only is Donne's complexity ' all on the surface—an intellectual and fully conscious complexity that we soon come to an end of,' none of his characteristic poems is *about* love at all : 'Donne's love poems could not exist unless love poems of a more genial character existed first. He shows us amazing shadows cast by love upon the intellect, the passions, and the appetite ; to learn of the substance which casts them we must go to other poets, more balanced, more magnanimous, and more humane.'

Mr. Lewis's argument, as may be seen from this summary, is compounded of sense and silliness. The sense comes out in several quotable remarks, but on the whole the silliness predominates. You see it in the remark about ' the substance ' of love which I have quoted (for Mr. Lewis Love is simple and constant, and he is convinced he finds it in poems about coral lips and Cupid's golden wings) ; you see it in the injunction to imagine ' Beatrice or Juliet or Perdita, or again, Amoret or Britomart . . . as the auditress throughout these poems ' ; and you see something like it in the digression on scansion. (Though I suspect that this is merely intended to throw dust in our eyes : when we are told a little later

[1]Mr. Lewis is, however, ' far from suggesting that the appearance of *vers libre* is simply a result ' of ' this widespread metrical ignorance.'

that ' Donne's real limitation is not that he writes *about*, but that he writes *in*, a chaos of violent and transitory passions. He is perpetually excited . . . ' it is useless to reply that his sure and subtle command of rhythm suggests that ' chaos ' is quite the wrong word!) It isn't very profitable to follow Mr. Lewis through various specious arguments (as when, on pages 69-70, he juggles with the word ' serious ') ; what gives his essay its representative importance is the tone. There is no need to be anything but amused by the opening assumption of superiority and detachment: ' Such phenomena as the present popularity of Donne or the growing unpopularity of Milton are not to be deplored ; they are rather to be explained.' But one must protest when Mr. Lewis sneers at modern critics—unnamed—whose work he has obviously failed to understand: on page 66 there is a parody of Dr. Richards's writing which might do credit to a sixth-form boy, and later we are told ' There is a great deal of dandyism (largely of Franco-American importation) in the modern literary world.' This sort of thing is of course simply an appeal to prejudice, and those who are suitably predisposed will be delighted with Mr. Lewis's account of the genesis of modern criticism, including as it does ' the final break-up of aristocracy and the consequent, and still increasing, distaste for arduous disciplines of sentiment.'[1] The paragraph from which this comes is as good an example as one can find of what I should call the lawyer's manner in literary criticism—sophistry, equivocation, and oblique denigration of the opposing party. It is only fair to add that the argument is expressed with elegance and wit: ' The " Petrarchan " sonneteers . . . are not trying to communicate faithfully the raw, the merely natural, impact of actual passion . . . and to accuse them of insincerity is like calling an oyster insincere because it makes its disease into a pearl.' But I seem to have heard that one before.

It is true of course that there is an element of mere fashion in Donne's present popularity ; and it is true also that in recent years his merits have had much more attention than his limitations. But an ' explanation ' of his popularity and an account of the way in which he falls short of the highest standard of excellence would be better undertaken by a critic less partisan and more generous

[1]Such as one obtains from the ' rich and nobly obvious poetry ' of the nineteenth century?

than Mr. Lewis shows himself to be. The qualities that made Donne an important influence on contemporary poetry can be discussed in terms of poetic technique and in terms of personality. He evolved his characteristic manner to express an unusually alert and complex self-knowledge, and his achievement would have been impossible without that ' seriousness ' which ' a modern critic ' attributes to him and which Mr. Lewis interprets as ' the opposite of gay.' ' Sincerity ' would be perhaps a better word: Mr. Lewis couldn't juggle with it so easily, and it suggests reasons for finding the Elizabethan sonneteers not only different but inferior. Reviewers seem to have thought Mr. Lewis's essay good fun even when they disagreed with his conclusions ; what they failed to notice is the adroit way in which he ministers to an uneasy distrust of modern poetry and modern criticism—a distrust which one finds too often in the writings of academic critics ; it is simply the reverse side of the predilection for guaranteed information that isn't likely to prove disturbing. Mrs. Bennet's reply to Mr. Lewis, ' The Love Poetry of John Donne,' is not academic ; it is in fact quite unacademically embarrassing.

It has seemed to me more important to concentrate on one significant aspect of the present volume than to attempt a cursory review of all the contents. Naturally among so many essays a few stand out as of especial interest, notably ' George Herbert ' by the Rev. F. E. Hutchinson, ' Henry Vaughan and the Theme of Infancy ' by Professor L. C. Martin, and ' A Note on Two Odes of Cowley ' by T. S. Eliot. Among the more informational studies Mr. Basil Willey's ' The Turn of the Century ' is a short but useful note on the various senses of ' Nature ' in the pre-Augustan period, and Professor Trend's ' Calderón and the Spanish Religious Theatre of the Seventeenth Century ' can be read with profit by anyone interested in the development of popular drama. Professor A. E. Taylor's 'Apology for Mr. Hobbes ' seems to me a fine piece of close reasoning, but I am not qualified to discuss it or the other philosophical essays—' The Limits of Locke's Rationalism ' by R. I. Aaron and ' Leibniz and the Fitness of Things ' by L. J. Russell. Besides various other literary studies the book also contains an essay on ' English Architecture during the Seventeenth Century ' by H. S. Goodhart-Rendel, and ' Words and Music: Some Obiter Dicta,' by Professor Sir Donald Francis Tovey.

L. C. KNIGHTS.

IN DEFENCE OF MILTON

MILTON AND WORDSWORTH, by Sir H. J. C. Grierson (C.U.P., 8/6).

THE MILTONIC SETTING, by E. M. W. Tillyard (C.U.P., 7/6).

To-day, when the quality of the literary studies encouraged or permitted at the academic places of education has an obviously important bearing on the prospects of literary culture (that is, of humane culture generally), it is correspondingly important, and certainly not less important than it has been in less desperate times, to defend literature—to defend the classics and the literary tradition—against the academic mind. The professional student of letters, the ' authority '—authority also, it must be remembered, in matters of curricula, instruction and examination at the high seats of learning—is rarely qualified in relation to his subject with one very relevant kind of authority (I had almost said the indispensable kind, but things are as they are), a kind that is not constituted, and need not be asserted or claimed: he is rarely a good firsthand critic—or even a good secondhand one. This is a truth we are often reminded of by the evident limitations of justly respected scholars: a man may do work that exacts the gratitude of us all as readers of poetry who yet betrays a lack of any developed sensibility, any fineness of perception and judgment.

So when Dr. Tillyard adduces Sir Herbert Grierson (in a large and varied company of supporters—Dr. Tillyard seems to think that numbers strengthen his case and recruits even from the Sunday newspaper) as pronouncing with peculiar authority on the critical questions concerning Milton's verse and its influence, one can only reply that the genuine respect in which one holds the editor of Donne doesn't confer on him authority of that kind:

> ' Professor Grierson has one peculiar advantage in writing on Milton. Having edited and praised Donne he cannot be suspected of giving untested allegiance to the old poetic hierarchy of the seventeenth century in which the Metaphysicals were accorded an inferior place. It is this that gives a peculiar force to his defence of Milton against modern defamation. The defence is admirable in itself: coming from the editor of Donne it may penetrate ears which had otherwise been quite sealed up against it.'

—I am obliged to comment that on Donne himself Professor Grierson speaks only with a limited kind of authority, the limitations being apparent in (to take a recent piece of evidence) that sentence from the Preface to the *Oxford Book of Seventeenth Century Verse* which I have quoted before in these pages:

> 'Palgrave's chief and best guide was Tennyson, on whose fine ear the metres of the "metaphysicals" must have grated as did those of his friend Browning; and a distinguished poet of our own day has in a recent lecture indicated clearly that his judgment is more in agreement with that of Tennyson than with that of the admirers of Donne.'

If anyone should think that this remark, with the reference to A. E. Housman, is susceptible of something less disqualifying than the obvious interpretation I refer him to the Introduction (so valuable in various ways) to *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the Seventeenth Century*, and especially to the passage (see p. 33) in which Professor Grierson agrees with Professor Gregory Smith that 'the direct indebtedness of the courtly poets to Ben Jonson is probably . . . small.'

I do not recall these things wantonly, but in order to make, with all due respect to Professor Grierson, a necessary point. At the worst, perhaps, I shall be taken as returning the note of impatience and asperity perceptible in his comments on my own criticism. What is there to say, then, except that the scholar who commits himself to such pronouncements, distinguished authority on seventeenth-century matters as he certainly is, has no claim to be treated as a critical authority on the verse of the period—or any verse?

But I must add at once that Professor Grierson, who has all the scholarly virtues, is incapable of original critical extravagance or of any of the kinds of critical originality for which Dr. Tillyard's book is remarkable, and he must, I imagine, if he has read the book, have been at least as surprised as myself when he came to p. 8 of it. We read there, after the appropriate quotation:

> 'That is the opening of *L'Allegro*, and it is one of the most puzzling passages in the whole of Milton; what possessed him that he should write such bombast? By what strange anticipation did he fall into the manner of the worst kind of

eighteenth-century ode? If Milton meant to be noble, he failed dreadfully. If, however, he knew what he was doing, he can only have meant to be funny. And if he meant to be funny, to what end? There is nothing in the rest of the poem that suggests humour—at least of the burlesque sort.'

—I must permit myself to comment, in defence of Milton (along with a great deal else), that these remarks seem to me to discredit generally the writer's very large critical pretensions. Did anyone ever before find that passage puzzling? I do not myself rank *L'Allegro* (or *Il Penseroso*) very high among Milton's works, but it never occurred to me to have doubts about his intention or touch in that opening paragraph, which seems to me, in relation to the change that follows, obviously successful. As for the ' strange anticipation ' that Dr. Tillyard descries, I can only say that the descrial makes the modesty that he expresses elsewhere about his qualifications to discuss eighteenth-century verse appear well-judged.

It is no mere academic deficiency, no mere lack of ability to perceive, that can explain so fantastic an exhibition. The explanation comes when Dr. Tillyard imparts his discovery that the themes of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* were derived from one of Milton's Latin *Prolusions*. We cannot believe that if there had been no such discovery of a ' solution ' there would have been any problem to solve. The discoverer, that is, convicts himself of something worse than a deficiency ; he exhibits a characteristic that has to be defined in terms of opposition to disinterestedness—a characteristic that we cannot imagine as impairing the scholarship of Professor Grierson, whom (as I have intimated) I take as representing the academic virtues.

The accumulation of scholarship—' work on '—about and around the great things of literature is in any case, for all the measure one may recognize of the relevant and illuminating, a matter for misgiving. Dr. Tillyard regrets, in his Preface, that he has had ' no room to refer to more than a fraction of the recent work on Milton ' that has interested him. The problem, as a university teacher should be especially aware, is to ensure that the libraries and reading-lists of such work shall not, in effect, be the reverse of an aid and an encouragement to humane education and the vitalizing currency of the classics. In these conditions

anything approaching the spirit that sets out to establish the indispensability of fresh impedimenta and seeks fresh impedimenta with a view to establishing, if possible, their indispensability, is peculiarly to be deplored. Dr. Tillyard's interest in his projects shows, it seems to me, neither the critic's nor the scholar's disinterestedness.

A concomitant effect apparent in the book is that of his never really knowing what, in the way of discussible theme, he is offering to do. A major explicit undertaking is to unsettle the traditional notion of Milton as a lonely genius, maintaining in his age an aloof and majestic self-sufficiency. In so far as Dr. Tillyard is likely to be influential (and that he is an accepted authority is a reason for reviewing him) I think this aim deplorable. He supposes himself to be defending Milton, but it seems to me an odd defence that offers to rob the English tradition—for such is explicitly Dr. Tillyard's aim—of that unique heroic figure. In fact, I must here come to Milton's defence (and tradition's) myself, and assert that Dr. Tillyard nowhere produces anything that can be called a reason. He merely produces a Milton of his own—very much his own—and with a truly notable assurance commends him to us as the up-to-date substitute for the great Milton. For Dr. Tillyard's Milton has no greatness, and is very much preoccupied with being up-to-date:

> 'When Dr. Leavis, after an excellent analysis of a passage in *Comus*, proceeds to pillory the style of *Paradise Lost* as exhibiting a shocking decline in vitality and flexibility, he takes no account of what the changing ideas of the age demanded. Being likewise so insistent that poets should be "aware of the contemporary situation," is he altogether just? If the changes Milton made in his style correspond to the general trend, ought he to be grudged the virtue of this "awareness"?' (p. 137).

—I should have been better pleased if Dr. Tillyard had pointed out the blunder in my analysis. As for my alleged insistence that poets should be 'aware of the contemporary situation,' I assure him that, if I have indeed used the phrase, it was certainly without any suspicion of what it would look like in the context given it by him, and that I will make a point of leaving it alone for the future. To attempt to suggest what this virtue of 'awareness' is as Dr. Tillyard conceives it and attributes it to Milton is to invite the

charge of parody. I will confine myself to some representative quotations:

> ' And when he comes to *Paradise Lost* he must needs once again bow to public opinion and write in a style remote from the virtuousness of his epitaph on Hobbes.' (p. 121).

> ' Anyhow the whole onus of choosing it (the style of *Paradise Lost*) is commonly thrust on Milton. If some readers can realize that he chose it for the very opposite reason, in order to be at one with his age, they may look on it with initial favour rather than with their present repugnance.' (p. 122).

> ' Quite rightly he stuck to his own convictions [Dr. Tillyard is dealing with Milton's failure to conform to fashion in the matter of the heroic couplet], but I am certain that he disliked going against the best contemporary practice.' (p. 204).

That ' best ' and the certitude are admirable ; the critic who aspires to awareness should ponder them and the ease with which the apparently discrepant criteria—that of the ' best ' and that of the ' rightly '—are (time aiding) reconciled and glide into one. Milton went against the best contemporary practice, but he must (we do him the justice to grant) have felt that it was wrong to do so ; and in any case, from the point of view of to-day's best contemporary opinion it is seen, not merely that he was right to stick to his convictions, but that his convictions were right. This is rather a complicated instance. Perhaps a simpler illustration is to be found in a modern poet who has been more immediately influential than Milton was. Mr. Eliot, one gathers, is so important a figure in modern poetry because, in tackling his problems of style, he accepted contemporary opinion and, in each of his various changes of manner, bowed once again to public opinion in order to be at one with his age.

For all I know, Dr. Tillyard will see nothing absurd in this suggestion, for Mr. Eliot has been accepted by the age, which indeed has got as far as Mr. Auden, and it is some years since the best opinion—the kind of opinion with which a critic practising in the spirit that Dr. Tillyard applauds as Milton's would cultivate solidarity—has, for the most part, ceased charging Mr. Eliot with literary Bolshevism. And a preoccupation with solidarity is something I have to insist on as a main characteristic of Dr.

Tillyard's criticism. It is so radical a habit that he tends to rest on it even in those places where his consciousness of applying, and even of showing a certain pioneering audacity in developing, the latest critical apparatus—of confounding the ' modern ' critic with an ultra-modernity—is most apparent. For example, the essay in which he undertakes to confute my account of Milton's Grand Style by showing (with the support of Lascelles Abercrombie, William James, A. E. Housman, Gilbert Murray and Miss Maud Bodkin)[1] that Milton is, or may be plausibly argued to be, remarkable for ' primitive feeling,' or ' a richer share than Donne of those fundamental qualities of mind that appear to have immediate contact with the forces of life '[2]—this essay begins (p. 43):

> ' If you judged Shakespeare and Milton by the standards of Henry James and Virginia Woolf, there is no doubt that Shakespeare would fare the better.'

—What does this mean? Perhaps by dint of questioning and suggestion some discussible proposition could be elicited from Dr. Tillyard. But such a sentence (and the formula is repeated more than once in the book) couldn't have been written and left standing if the author hadn't been more concerned with the response he was relying on than the thought he supposed himself to be expressing. Again, a few lines further on, he writes :

> ' Dr. Leavis (who is a better critic when he encourages us to read Carew or Pope then when he puts Spenser or Shelley on the index) . . . '

—This is Dr. Tillyard's way of referring to the fact that I have criticized Shelley adversely and to the supposition that I do not care for Spenser as much as for Pope, Yeats and Eliot. It is a way that no self-respecting critic should permit himself ; it should be left to the Sunday reviewers.

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[1] I hope Miss Bodkin's Archetypal Patterns are not going to become a part of the ' modern critic's ' outfit.

[2] *cf.* ' A second primitive feeling may be deduced from the architectonic power which critics have so often praised in Milton. There is something quite uncommon, something alive and passionate, in the thorough manner in which Milton shapes and finishes off his plot,' etc. See p. 55.

Dr. Tillyard at the same time, in his assumption that it is praiseworthy to find reasons for recommending accepted authors (I cannot see why he should have been convinced by the reasons I give in favour of Carew and Pope) and reprehensible to criticize such authors adversely, seems to me to exhibit one of the most deadeningly academic traits of the academic mind. To his phrase about ' putting on the index ' I might retort that Dr. Tillyard pursues the steady aim of putting on the list of works that students must drudge through, and learn to admire, everything that he sees a chance of disinterring from literary history. This representative passage will suggest the spirit and manner of his book:

> 'I am not especially attracted by the Miltonizing blank verse of the eighteenth century, but if I read it more assiduously I might like it better. So might others who have said hard things of it. And it may well be that, conditioned as it was, eighteenth-century poetry did well to model itself in part on Milton. Anyhow, I have not the slightest faith that by refusing to imitate Milton it would have developed powers that it does not now possess. However, this is not a topic I wish to pursue, and I will content myself with asking those who have condemned eighteenth-century Miltonics without having given the matter a great deal of attention to read (or re-read) Dr. C. V. Deane's *Aspects of eighteenth-century Nature Poetry* before they reiterate their condemnation.' (p. 114).

That a liking for the Miltonizing blank verse of the eighteenth century is (in spite of the generous inclusiveness of the project) not beyond Dr. Tillyard's powers to achieve I am sufficiently convinced ; he has, I think, supplied plenty of evidence of it in this book. For instance, he is capable of convincing himself, with a show of analysis (I am perhaps prejudiced here, since his account of Keats's ode affects me as being like a miscomprehending and ruinous adaptation of the analysis which I elaborated in these pages in March, 1936), that *Lycidas* and the *Ode to a Nightingale* are almost identical in structure and significance (though Milton

> ' does not let his despairing emotions prey on him quite so thoroughly: indeed, he insists on blending with them a measure of dogma and a conscientious sense of literary tradition).' (p. 36).

Again, it is, as I and everyone I have consulted judge it, a fairly ordinary piece of stiff-jointed, pedantically-gaited Miltonic blank verse that, with enthusiasm, analysis and every appearance of conviction, Dr. Tillyard, on pp. 132-4, pronounces superlatively remarkable for expressive sensitiveness of movement:

> ' Outside Shakespeare and a few passages of the Elizabethan drama such perfectly modulated blank verse is not to be found in English.'

The truly monumental instance in this book of the tendency to find new burdens for the literary student is Dr. Tillyard's offer to bestow on him an English Epic Tradition:

> ' Now in recent years there has been a distinct shift of opinion towards taking the *Faerie Queene* as something more than a pretty series of pageants and allowing it to speak for a whole civilization. With that shift I sympathize, and so sympathizing I should call the poem an epic. But what of *Arcadia*? Even if it attempts to be an epic, does it succeed? I answer that, for anyone who has the leisure and the patience to read it slowly, it does . . . The unfailing vitality of the prose rhythms matches the unfailing enchantment of Spenser's metre.' (p. 158).
>
> ' Although the *Davideis* is a better poem than is usually allowed, only in one particular does it make any *vital* contribution to the English epic.' (p. 162).

There seems no point in arguing here. I will only state my own view that if the English Epic, or the English Epic Tradition, became anywhere a recognized academic subject of study, anyone who had furthered that end would have deserved ill both of the literary student and of Milton.

And that there seems no point in arguing with Dr. Tillyard is what I have to say generally: between the unsatisfactory nature of his interest in poetry and his concern for an ultra-modernity of critical method he has, it seems, in the realm of criticism and scholarship, lost all sense of what an argument properly is. One can, of course, when he says (p. 118) that

> ' Milton (sensitive once more to the trend of advanced opinion in his own day) reacted against the riot of verbiage that makes the Elizabethans and Jacobeans so exhilarating,'

and refers to ' the antiquated method of profusion,' ask certain obvious questions (Spenser, Shakespeare, Donne and Fletcher?—Marlowe? Ben Jonson?) and suggest that an argument about style that starts comfortably with so large a feat of assimilation can hardly be expected to lurch into closeness and acuity. But I will not go on accumulating such annotations. I will merely, taking the above illustration as a sufficient warrant, say that Dr. Tillyard's arguments, when he undertakes to dispose of either Mr. Eliot's views or my own about Milton's verse, seem to me to be elaborating merely an incomprehension of the issues. And perhaps, in case I should be thought to accept the views that Dr. Tillyard seems to attribute to me (or ' the modern critic '), I had better add finally that I have nowhere complained

> ' that Milton did not write *Paradise Lost* in the style of Shakespeare ' (p. 119)

or (what seems to me a different thing)

> ' in a conversational style '

or

> ' the tone of ordinary speech ' ;

and that I have never, I think, given anyone any excuse for supposing that I hold the ' language of small talk ' to be ' the basis of all good poetry ' (p. 21) ; nor can I believe that any critic, modern or other, has held the ' sole object of art,' or the object of art at all, to be

> ' to bring into consciousness, to maintain in an unrelaxed awareness, the daily traffic of an intelligent mind with the world around it ' (p. 43)

or has urged it against Milton as a poet that he does

> ' not show a simultaneous awareness of the four senses to what is going on in the street outside ' (p. 48).

One gets used, of course, to having attributed to one for demolition views one has never advanced and never held. Even Professor Grierson performs at my expense a substitution, and does it in full view. Having said (p. 128) that a charge

' brought to-day against Milton is that he has broken the tradition of English poetic diction,'

he quotes this passage from me:

> ' The predominance in various forms of Milton, from Thomson through Gray, Cowper, and Akenside to Wordsworth and, although allied with Spenser, through Keats and Tennyson . . . must receive enough attention . . . to bring out the significance of what we have witnessed in our time: the reconstitution of the English tradition by the reopening of communications with the seventeenth century of Shakespeare, Donne, Middleton, Tourneur and so on.'

He proceeds at once to comment:

> ' This is a claim difficult to understand exactly. In his own age Donne was *not* regarded as a preserver of the English tradition but, by Drummond for example (as the late Professor W. P. Ker insisted), as an innovator. The tradition of English poetic diction as established by Chaucer had been renewed and enriched by Spenser . . . '

And Professor Grierson goes on in this way, as if he were dealing with some proposition advanced in my paragraph. He has already, immediately before, having expressed himself unable to conjecture what I mean by talking about ' Milton's habit of exploiting language as a kind of musical medium outside himself, as it were,' suggested (p. 127):

> ' But Mr. Leavis may mean that there are not the passionate ratiocinative subtleties of Donne's songs and elegies. But surely these would have been out of place, and surely there may be more than one kind of good poetry.'

That I myself believe there may be more than one kind of good poetry might, I think, have been gathered from that paragraph of mine which Professor Grierson then quotes, and I cannot see what excuse he has for supposing me to make Donne the model and criterion: ' The seventeenth century of Shakespeare, Donne, Middleton and Tourneur,' and, I might have added, of Ben Jonson, the Court poets and Marvell. These poets seem to me to exhibit

between them a wide range of differences and to have written good poetry in a variety of manners. But all these manners have, in their different ways, a vital relation to speech, to the living language of the time. Milton invented a medium the distinction of which is to have denied itself the life of the living language. What I mean by this I still think I have made sufficiently plain ; in any case, the fact seems to me plain in itself. And it is a fact that seems to me unaffected by any amount of arguing, in Dr. Tillyard's vein, that Milton does not latinize as much as some people suppose, or that Shakespeare has latinizing lines and phrases.

What is meant by saying that Milton exploits language as a kind of musical medium[1] outside himself and that his influence predominates in the nineteenth century comes out clearly enough (as I tried to show) when we compare Keats's Miltonizing *Hyperion* with the induction to the revised version and with the *Ode to Autumn*, and when we note the close affinities between Keats's Miltonizing style and the Tennysonian. Professor Grierson, though he criticizes views he produces as mine[2] and quotes the passage reproduced above, does not consider that argument (which has a closely woven context) and Dr. Tillyard's discussion of what Keats says in the Letters doesn't affect it.

F. R. Leavis.

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[1] ' Mr. Eliot says that you have to read Milton twice: once for the sense, and once for the sound. Might not further readings yield a more unified result?' (*The Miltonic Setting*, p. 132)—Mr. Eliot makes the point admirably, giving a sufficient answer to Dr. Tillyard's arguments (pp. 91-3) about the close of *Lycidas* and the passage from *Paradise Lost* ; and Dr. Tillyard's sally is, in its incomprehension, impertinent, following as it does on the suggestion that people who disagree with him about Milton do so because they haven't read Milton enough. Perhaps I had better put it on record that the pocket Milton I have referred to in writing this review is falling to pieces from use, and that it is the only book I carried steadily in my pocket between 1915 and 1919.

[2] He even seems to associate me (see p. 122) with the modern cult of Dryden, from which I have explicitly dissociated myself.

ARISTOCRACY AND THE MIDDLE-CLASSES IN GERMANY: Social Types in German Literature, 1830-1900, by Ernst Kohn-Bramstedt (London, P. S. King, 1937, 15/-).

The book by Dr. Kohn-Bramstedt—though devoted to a study of nineteenth-century Germany—is of interest to every student of literature since it represents one of the most successful and careful applications of the sociological method. Dr. Kohn-Bramstedt has obviously little sympathy for Marxist simplifications though he never even alludes to the Marxist interpretation as such. He is an empiricist who takes the novel between 1830 and 1900 as material for the study of social realities, especially for the study of social types, and groups, their prestige, their attitudes towards each other, etc. The æsthetic question is quite consciously neglected and ignored. The fact that the novel is a work of art is considered rather a ' limitation and shortcoming ' for the purposes of social study (p. 3), though it is admitted that it conveys an empirical material of social analysis quite unobtainable in contemporary scholarship. At the same time Dr. Kohn-Bramstedt does not neglect the other side of the question: the illumination of literature itself by a study of society from other non-literary sources. He assembles many criteria which could be used for an evaluation of the writers discussed and he answers questions as to the correctness and relevance of the picture of the society they represent, etc. A special part of the book is devoted to a related question: to the position of the writer in society, his attitude to the different classes either as a propagandist or critic or a neutral observer, to questions of patronage and literary societies, prestige of the writer and his own self-confidence. One of the merits of the book is Dr. Kohn-Bramstedt's reluctance to agree to simple distinctions: he is particularly good in describing the transition from the rigid 'estates' society of the eighteenth century to the more liberal class-society of the nineteenth century and in distinguishing between different groups of the bourgeosie in different times and places. The results of the painstaking study are most illuminating for a comprehension of nineteenth-century Germany, the power and limitations of the aristocracy, the rise of the middle-classes in spite of their political impotence, the peculiar rôle of the well-to-do Jew and many side-lights are thrown on the very different development in England

(see *e.g.*, the remarks on Philistinism and Matthew Arnold on p. 223). Altogether this is a valuable book in the best pre-Hitler German tradition: it should counteract the usual dogmatic and at the same time haphazard way of using the sociological method for the study of literature. Dr. Kohn-Bramstedt establishes a really close relation between literature and society and shows in detail what this relation was like.

The modest and sensible introduction on the sociological approach to literature does not, however, face the question whether the sociological method could not be used for other purposes. I cannot help thinking that the study of literature as an art would profit more by an attention to such questions as the social-conditionedness of æsthetic norms. The validity of a certain system of æsthetic norms is frequently connected with a special social stratum. The most advanced norm is frequently held by the highest layer of society and later this norm sinks socially towards the folklore and popular art, while new norms are arising with social changes. The connection between the most advanced art and the highest society is, of course, by no means necessary in all times of history. We can, therefore, ask such sociological questions as what æsthetic norms were adopted by a specific class or also age-group or sex at a given time. How far, can we ask, does a social class impose its norm or taste on the other classes? How far does one class accept the norm created or transmitted by another? What is the position of æsthetic values in the general scale of values? What are the relations of literary values to other systems of values like morals, religion, etc. I do not suggest that these questions have never been discussed at all, or that the author should have discussed them in the body of his book, but the fact that they can be asked shows that Dr. Kohn-Bramstedt has not exhausted the rich possibilities of a sociological approach to literature, an approach which might take also account of literature as an art. Dr. Kohn-Bramstedt gives us rather an extremely careful and judicious study in the literary approach towards a sociology of the classes and in particular, towards an analysis of the peculiar position of the writer. The study can be recommended as a model piece of research which combines full documentation with a clear realization of the difficult theoretical questions involved.

R. WELLEK.

MR. TURNER'S MOZART

MOZART, by W. J. Turner (Gollancz, 16/-).

The reception accorded to this book has been oddly mixed. Mr. Richard Church and the other critics who go in for soul and sympathy have larded it with eulogy. Critics of academic prestige like Mr. Ernest Walker have treated it with cynically complacent frigidity. Mr. Cecil Gray thought that Mr. Turner ought to have proved himself a real man by explaining to his congenitally squeamish readers how all the best artists are committed (by birthright, as it were) to excesses *in Baccho et Venere*. Taking it all round, I think Mr. Turner has been hard done by.

I wouldn't say that this is a good critical work about Mozart—such a book is yet to be written—but at least it is reasonable, sensible, and modest. I say modest because Mr. Turner has been accused of lack of generosity to other Mozart critics. I have read his book carefully and I can find no evidence for this charge. He happens to have a conception of Mozart's genius which he wishes to bring home to the reader ; he happens also to think that his conception is the right one. If he did not think he was right it would have been better that this book had remained unwritten since it would merely have cluttered the libraries with verbiage pointless because without conviction. Nobody could say that Mr. Turner, even at his wildest and most wrong-headed, lacked convictions. In this book he writes because he has something to say. But of wilful ungenerosity to his predecessors I can find not a trace.

What Mr. Turner has to say about Mozart does not seem to me wild or wrong-headed at all ; I think it is very sensible and just. My only quarrel is that the ' secret ' of Mozart's genius which Mr. Turner so painfully reveals with such awful italics and such hushed expectancy, proves to be not such a very secret secret after all. I cannot really believe that it is necessary, at this date, to protest with such vehemence against the Victorian notion of the ' gentle, child-like ' Mozart ; nor would any of the unusually percipient and superior readers whom Mr. Turner continually tells us he has in mind, want to dismiss as stupidly extravagant his main thesis—that Mozart ' surpasses all the great musicians of genius before or since . . . in his possession not only of a greater

degree of purely musical talent than has been possessed by any man, but also in the combination in him of such a variety of human qualities of head and heart in so high a degree of vitality that we may say of him that he had a truly Shakespearean nature.' But if Mr. Turner doesn't—and I don't think he would claim to—take us very far into the ' mystery ' of Mozart's genius, he does present, quietly and with a wealth of accumulated evidence rather surprising from so belligerent a critic, a cogent impression of Mozart as a composer and personality of supreme and terrifying power. His criticisms of the general standpoint of Mr. Eric Blom's incidentally admirable study, seem to me absolutely just.

There is very little in this book that can claim to be called musical criticism ; but the biographical portion is good and completely unsentimentalized, and the letters are retranslated with charm and spontaneity. The reviewer who found Mr. Turner ' ungenerous ' pounces on a few minor inaccuracies ; I am grateful for the letters' spiritual fidelity and liveliness. The most interesting passages of the book are probably those estimating Mozart's position in contemporary musical activity, passages in which the relation of Mozart to the *Sturm und Drang* period is properly but rather excessively stressed. The account of *Cosi fan tutte* is interesting and it is good to see someone protesting against the stupid and long-standing tradition of facetiousness in productions of *Die Zauberflöte*. It's a pity Mr. Turner has nothing to say about the piano concertos, in some ways the most intimate of all Mozart's compositions ; and the quasi-philosophical disquisitions at the end seem to me unhelpful. As usual, Mr. Turner is irritating when he presumably forgets the superior percipience of his readers and starts explaining quite commonplace ideas in school-masterly words of two syllables.

But to indicate the extent of my approvals and disapprovals would take more space than it is worth. We all know Mr. Turner's immaturities, his unreliability, his trumpery bellicosities, his occasional really astoundingly inane failures of insight—as in the remarks about Fauré quoted in the last number of *Scrutiny*, and an incredible list of composers ' poor in experience but rich in image-making power,' comprising D. Scarlatti, Debussy and Elgar alongside Grieg (I believe) and Sullivan. His may not be a subtle mind. Yet this reasonable and readable book makes one realize

how decent and how honest a person he is compared with the majority of those who infest the suburbs of the musical republic. He is as ill served by those who crook the knee to his superior wisdom as by those who, having given evidence of not one tenth of his genuine love of and sympathy for Mozart and Mozart's works, affect to despise his writings as self-opinionated or unscholarly or both.

W. H. Mellers.

A PROPHETIC ROMANTIC

BERLIOZ, by J. H. Elliot (The Master Musicians series, Dent, 4/6).

Mr. Elliot's book is of the type somewhat equivocally described by publishers as 'sensible.' Its sensibleness is a real virtue, for its tone is admirably restrained and unbiassed ; on the other hand sensibleness seems a not very positive virtue, so that the book leaves one dissatisfied.

Of course Mr. Elliot might properly protest that his book is an introduction to Berlioz, intended for the 'general' reader, and that an exhaustive treatment and a comprehensive critical appraisement were hardly called for ; but I think the implied distinction is a fine one. For the book seems to me to fail as a general introduction precisely because of its critical limitations. Presumably Mr. Elliot is trying to make out his case for Berlioz ; yet so 'sensible' is his attitude, so noncommittal his judgments, that one comes away with the feeling that he hasn't any pronounced convictions about his subject at all. There is something like complacency in the glibness with which he praises and blames. It would seem hardly necessary to point out that the first essential of a book intending to stimulate interest in Berlioz would be that it should give some convincing notion of the nature of Berlioz's genius—whether one agreed with this notion or not would be comparatively unimportant—but Mr. Elliot is unaware of this necessity and seems at times perversely unwilling to understand what Berlioz was trying to do. His approach to Berlioz is that of a twentieth-century musicologist. It is a reasonable approach: only it is a little too facile.

If one wants to introduce Berlioz to a wider, more ' popular ' audience one has first to dispose of the ignorant conventional misconceptions of his genius which are still current. Mr. Elliot seems aware, in a muffled sort of way, that various factors have resulted in a widespread illiteracy among professional and non-professional musicians where Berlioz's music is concerned, and that several distinguished artists have of late years protested against it. Thus he tepidly discredits the legend of the ' romantic ' Berlioz and is dubious about the validity of the programmatic aspect. On the other hand he follows convention in speaking of Berlioz's weariness and declining powers during the latter part of his life—a notion which is not so much wrong as absurdly over-simple. And he admits that he finds Berlioz's music as a whole ' inexplicable,' thus fostering the hoary fallacy of Berlioz the unpredictable, creating eccentric compositions in revolutionary and wildly inconsistent forms. (' There is not one Berlioz, there are half a dozen ; and they are as different from one another as they are different from all other composers. The Berlioz of the *Requiem* and the *Te Deum* is poles apart from the Berlioz of *Benvenuto Cellini*. What have either of these in common with . . . *Roméo et Juliette*? Where does the man who wrote the *Symphonie Funèbre* . . . fit into the scheme? . . . Berlioz remains the most baffling phenomenon in musical history. He had tremendous genius, but no power—or no desire—to concentrate it in one channel . . . ') Mr. Elliot says he states all this ' with confidence ' ; it still seems to me nonsense. And I have, at least, Berlioz's own encouragement in not finding his music quite so inexplicable. It has always seemed to me odd that critics who find Berlioz's work baffling never seem to notice the composer's own account of his music in his *Memoirs*. Possibly they wouldn't agree with it ; but to refuse to recognize it as a possible point of view is no more than perverse.

Here, anyway, are Berlioz's words. He is speaking of the ' classicality ' of his music and refuting those critics who had looked upon his *L'Enfance du Christ* as a complete *volte face*. ' In that work,' he writes,

> ' many people imagined they could detect a radical change in my style and manner. This opinion is entirely without foundation. The subject naturally lent itself to a gentle and simple style of music, and for this reason alone was more in accordance

with their taste and intelligence. Time would probably have developed these qualities, but I should have written *L'Enfance du Christ* in the same style twenty years earlier.

' The principal reason for the long war waged against me lies in the antagonism existing between my musical feeling and that of the great mass of the Parisian public. Many looked upon me as a madman because I considered them as children or simpletons.'

And further on he writes,

' Generally speaking, my style is very bold, but it has not the slightest tendency to subvert any of the constituent elements of art. On the contrary, it is my endeavour to add to their number. I have never dreamt of making music ' without melody,' as so many in France are stupid enough to say. Such a school now exists in Germany, and I hold it in detestation. It is easy to see that, without confining myself to a short air for the theme of a piece, as the great masters often do, I have always taken care that my compositions shall be rich in melody. The value of the melodies, their distinction, novelty and charm, may of course be disputed. It is not for me to estimate them ; but to deny their existence is absurd and unfair. But as they are often on a large scale, an immature or unappreciative mind cannot properly distinguish their forms ; or they may be joined to other secondary melodies, which are invisible to that class of mind ; and lastly, such melodies are so unlike the little absurdities to which the term is applied by the lower stratum of the musical world, that it finds it impossible to give the same name to both.

' The prevailing characteristics of my music are passionate expression, intense ardour, rhythmical animation, and unexpected turns. When I say passionate expression I mean an expression determined on enforcing the inner meaning of its subject, even when that subject is the contrary of passion, and when the feeling to be expressed is gentle and tender, or even profoundly calm. This is the sort of expression that has been discovered in *L'Enfance du Christ*, the *Ceil* scene in *Faust*, and the Sanctus of the *Requiem*.'[1]

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[1]The translation is Ernest Newman's.

I think personally that all this is absolutely just, immeasurably the finest criticism of Berlioz that has ever been written. There is some truth in the suggestion that Berlioz was so astonishingly original a genius that we are only beginning to catch up with him. He is anyway, one would have thought, a great enough figure to demand, with the confidence of genius, a little humility from his listeners. To try to understand his intentions, above all to *listen* to his music with our faculties alert and awake, not to irrelevant ideas of what the music *ought* to sound like, according to (say) Dannreuther's prescription—to do this is surely not to submit to hypnosis. What does the ' professional ' or academic critic mean when he calls Berlioz's harmony poor, his counterpoint poor, his melody non-existent? These things do not exist apart from the created compositions they occur in. Is it still hopeless to make this class of person understand that the only question worth asking is not Are Berlioz's fugues really fugues? but do they, in actual performance, come off? Even though one may not be able to answer with an unqualified Yes—for to respond sympathetically is not the same as being uncritical—one won't feel like ascribing the notorious ' crudities ' to Technical Incompetence, nor will one be satisfied with the only speciously less simple account of Mr. Elliot. I shall be referring to this point again at the end of this review.

If it is a truism, then, that Berlioz is a great romantic genius, it is a truism the precise meaning and justice of which needs examining very carefully. Nearly everyone grants that Berlioz had ' genius,' the implication being, as in the case of Lawrence, that you've got to explain away somehow a sort of troublesome vitality that won't square with ready-made conceptions of the valuable and true. ' Genius ' is, anyhow, the measure of Berlioz's romanticism, and such an incident as the celebrated story of Estelle certainly suggests that Berlioz was a person of abnormal sensibilities. But, notwithstanding the immense mane of hair, the transports, pistols and phials of poison, we begin to understand how completely different was Berlioz's romanticism from that of the conventional romantic when we come to consider the nature of that amazing originality of which I've already spoken—when we realize that the composer was, in his century, a completely isolated figure.

What is remarkable about the music of this fantastic romantic

is that it is never introspective—' self-regarding '—music ; in this it differs from the work of almost all his contemporaries. Perhaps we can understand this if we realize that Berlioz was the only superlatively great artist which France of the Napoleonic era produced. There is all the glory and intoxication of the Imperial epoch in Berlioz, and there is also the bitterness of the collapse. If we think of Berlioz conducting, in the open air, with a drawn sword, an enormous orchestra and a military band of two hundred in his *Symphonie Funèbre et Triomphale*, and then collapsing in tears over the kettle-drums, we can realize a little of the fervour and intoxication which the era inspired ; but we can also see how this apotheosizing of martial, imperialistic glory implied an extraversive, rather than an introspective and subjective, attitude on the part of the composer. This symphony, and the *Military Te Deum*, are, in the words of Sacheverell Sitwell, ' the Napoleonic legend seen through an imagination that lifted it to the highest planes ' ; they are ' sudden recreations of vanished glory in his imagination,' visions of Babylonian and Ninevean grandeur through the medium of ' une organisation babylonienne.' To hear the *Symphonie Funèbre et Triomphale* performed, even in a modern concert hall and with less than half the number of performers that Berlioz demanded, is an unforgettable experience and one to which there is, as far as I know, no parallel in any of the arts. The funeral march is a weird, soaring melody such as no-one but Berlioz has ever been able to write, but it is buoyant, taut, proud, quite unlike the conventional romantic Chopinesque funeral march ;[1] the final march of triumph is a dazzling transformation of the 'military' tune into a song of heroism, a heroism so fervent yet so poised and aristocratic as to make all subsequent attempts at heroism look sheepish. In sheer excitement of sound this march is overwhelming ; but there is an extraordinary refinement and aristocratic finesse in the heroic tune, an astonishing poise and avoidance of banality ; this is martial heroism and martial heroism implies the discipline of martial order.

Now I think that if, with this in mind, one turns to Berlioz's greatest and more purely ' autobiographical ' achievements, one can understand more easily the peculiar and significant classicality which critics are at last agreeing to see in them. What is so surprising is the detachment and æsthetic impersonality of these

works, despite their apparently romantic trappings. The economy with which Berlioz uses his colossal resources in the *Grande Messe des Morts* (which I consider to be unquestionably one of the highest peaks to which the art of music has ever attained),[2] is altogether characteristic, despite those people who still wish to represent Berlioz as an unruly extremist. The effect of the four brass bands, when they do appear, is tremendous and masterly, apocalyptic, but no less terrible is the desolating chorus of the *Agnus Dei*. This is music of a piteous and agonizing intensity, slender in its means but unbearable in its poignancy ; and always the music remains aristocratic, refined. Moreover this piece is not an isolated example ; there is music of a similar piteous tenderness and delicacy in *Roméo et Juliette*, in *L'Enfance du Christ*, in *Les Troyens*. All Berlioz's most typical music, whether in these poignant fragments or in such a thing as the colossal fugue on Hosanna, is a music of Aristocracy ; it is music conceived at *white* heat, and the metaphor is singularly apt because it suggests not only the intensity and fervour of Berlioz's emotional processes but also the remarkable clarity, radiancy and refinement of the result of these processes. This aristocratic classicality is present even in the most directly autobiographical of Berlioz's compositions, the *Symphonie Fantastique*, Berlioz's contribution to the nineteenth century self-dramatizing Tragic Hero cult, for the ' horrors ' in this music are oddly restrained and impersonal. There is no parallel to the simultaneous intensity and impersonality of this music anywhere in the nineteenth century ; one has to look back to Mozart or to Gluck for anything similar. Berlioz's admiration for Gluck is, indeed, revealing, and it is no accident that his most ambitious work, *Les Troyens*, should be an opera conceived in the Gluck tradition, though on a scale of grandeur and imperial magnificence utterly beyond anything that Gluck had dreamed of.

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[1]Berlioz despised Chopin's music. We remember his brilliant *bon mot* which is also, of course, characteristically penetrating criticism: ' Chopin was dying all his life.'

[2]Berlioz himself said: ' If I were threatened with the destruction of the whole of my works save one, I should crave mercy for the *Messe des Morts*.' (Letter to Ferrand, 1867. The *Requiem* was written in 1837).

In all Berlioz's most characteristic music, particularly in *Les Troyens* and the *Requiem*, there is this vision of heroic and majestic dignity combined with that singular inimitable piquancy in the Berliozian melody—a peculiarly acrid sense of bitterness and loss, and a sepulchral, almost necromantic, evocation of things beneath the surface. It is easy to overestimate the ' sepulchral ' qualities of, say, the *Requiem*—I think Mr. Elliot does so— or at any rate to interpret them in misleading terms. There remains, however, this quality that one cannot explain ; it is as far from the conventional notion of the ' romantic ' horrors as it is—in Mr. Sorabji's words—from the ' normal healthy mind ' of the ' average ' citizen. It is music, Mr. Sorabji has said, viewed ' in a glass darkly.' It is uncanny, eerie, in touch with the horrible and grotesque. Yet so perfect and controlled is the detachment of the artist that, when we listen to this music, it is not the horror that we are conscious of, but the pity of it. It is significant that we would not think of describing Berlioz's most typical creations as ' beautiful ' ; Mr. Elliot rightly remarks that they ' are no more beautiful than an earthquake.' Even in his most radiantly lovely music—the tranquil lyrical flights of *Roméo*, the vivacity of *Béatrice et Benedict*—one senses, as it were, this undertone of the uncanny which never quite becomes explicit. Mozart and Busoni are the only other composers who possess this quality to anything like a comparable degree. It's another of the things that ' immature and unappreciative minds ' prefer to ignore.

The characteristics that make Berlioz so significant a figure to-day are really summarized for us in his own account of his music which I have quoted earlier. We may mention here, briefly, the pure musicality of his work, his avoidance of oversubjectivity, and the consequent tendency of his art towards the operatic form—a tendency which foreshadows the twentieth-century cult of ballet as a relief from excessive introspection. Most central of all is the importance with which he invested the melodic element of his music, his perfection of an original melodic idiom of incomparable sensitiveness and beauty, freed from the outmoded conventions of the eighteenth-century symphonic form—and the corresponding restraint of his harmony and the complex large-scale organization of his rhythm. (It's interesting to note that some of these melodies tend away from diatonicism towards a unique sort of modality, a

characteristic which Mr. Elliot dubiously calls Berlioz's 'archaism'). Cecil Gray, in pointing out the importance for the contemporary composer of Berlioz's immense individual melodies, adds that the composers' music is nevertheless primarily homophonic and in this respect is not likely to influence the music of the future. I don't think the point is an important one. Melody, with Berlioz, came first—that is the crux of the matter. And Mr. Gray would seem to agree that it is only a half-truth to deny to Berlioz mastery of the great polyphonic forms.

But quite apart from these technical considerations the figure of Berlioz has a curiously, almost symbolically, prophetic quality. That the *Grande Messe des Morts* is the greatest non-religious (in the limited sense) requiem is a minor point, perhaps, though interesting. But the isolation and perpetual bafflement of this remarkable but unhappy creature, his continual disillusionment, give warning, in no uncertain terms, of what was to come. For it cannot be denied that, completely successful as Berlioz's finest and most wonderful works were, he did not accomplish half that he aspired towards. Possibly this is what the critics really mean when they speak of his ' crudities,' though it's hard to forgive their impudence. There is a strange feeling of nonfulfilment about Berlioz's music considered as a whole. The comparison with Wagner is instructive in this connection, for no man could have hoped for a more complete fulfilment of his ideals and ambitions than Wagner obtained both in his life and in his art. Wagner's music has a wholeness, a sense of fulfilment, which Berlioz's lacks ; but we cannot therefore conclude that Wagner is the more profound and valuable composer. And it is perhaps the last ironic twist of the knife that Wagner should have been able to persuade his audience to deify him whereas Berlioz, who wrote in *Les Troyens* ' music of the gods ' if ever such music has been written, should have died a broken and fatally misunderstood man. True, Berlioz leaves one feeling that he was potentially an even greater composer than he is in achievement. But can we glibly say, with Mr. Elliot, that he ' failed ' in the gigantic task he had set himself? He suffered so much mostly because of his superb distinction of mind—musicians of brilliant and powerful versatility of intellect, such as Busoni and van Dieren, are in this respect his successors. If he ' failed ' where Wagner succeeded, there is obviously room for

some discrimination about the nature of failure and success.

There is irony, too, in the fact that, until our own day, the only way in which Berlioz has exerted any influence on practising musicians should have been in the direction of that old bogey, the development of Orchestral Technique. That Berlioz, whose instrumentation—the flesh, as it were, in which his imaginings take shape—is of such exquisite delicacy and clean brilliance, should be the progenitor of the monstrous orchestras of the early twentieth century, which in their turn are indirectly responsible for more bad music than one cares to mention—this is a paradox which would have appealed to Berlioz's own sense of the sardonic. Of course Berlioz is a ' virtuoso of the orchestra ' ; he has the great artist's mastery of his medium. He is a virtuoso of the orchestra as Liszt and Busoni—or for that matter Mozart— are virtuosos of the keyboard, or as Handel and Bellini are virtuosos of the voice. The superstition that the virtuoso must necessarily be creatively inferior is one that has died hard, yet it is manifestly, glaringly, irreconcilable with the facts. The stigma of virtuoso is another of the reasons why ' immature and unappreciative minds ' have turned from Berlioz's music with a shrug of ignorant indifference or equally ignorant conceit.

It might be objected that if this is a review of Mr. Elliot's book, I am merely telling him what he ought to have said—substituting my idea of Berlioz for his. Well, my complaint is really not that I disagree with Mr. Elliot's idea but that I find it so difficult to discover what precisely it is. In other words Mr. Elliot seems to me to do nothing to protect Berlioz against the attacks of those ' immature and unappreciative minds.' Perhaps the most useful book on Berlioz is still Mr. W. J. Turner's, since this author, for all his faults of overemphasis, does seem to have a genuine, if indeterminate insight into the singular nature of Berlioz's genius. It's a pity he (characteristically) bludgeons the reader with such childish persistency, since a man who dislikes Berlioz's music, or dislikes some preconceived notion of it, is not likely to be converted through being told that for that reason he is a dolt and a blockhead. In a general way, indeed, his book would be the better for a little of Mr. Elliot's restraint ; he is properly severe on people who offer to ' explain ' Berlioz's crudities (if they exist), but on the other hand he has nothing to say about the subtle problem of the com-

poser's ' failure,' a problem which, for being subtle, is no less real.

But then, no-one would want to pretend that Mr. Turner himself could be called ' unappreciative.'

W. H. MELLERS.

GRAMOPHONE RECORDS OF FAURÉ

I have been asked for information about recordings of Fauré's music. Most of the big Fauré recordings have been withdrawn in this country owing to lack of support ; but the Bach Society's very good performance of the *Requiem*, opus 48, and the Krettly Quartet's version of the *Quartet*, opus 121, can still be obtained from France, through E.M.G.

By far the best easily accessible recordings of Fauré's work are Panzera's superb versions of the song cycles *L'Horizon Chimérique*, and *La Bonne Chanson*—performances of perfect artistry, excellently reproduced. Another late song, *Jardin Nocturne* from *Mirages*, is recorded by Bernac and Poulenc, and there is a prize piano record of the *Sixth Nocturne* by Jean Doyen. The numbers of these records are listed below. Several earlier songs, including *Le Parfum Impérissable*, have also been recorded by Panzera, and figure in most comprehensive catalogues.

	Rimington van Wyck's Foreign List	E.M.G.'s Foreign List	
L'Horizon Chimérique	G 1063	B 100	8/3
La Bonne Chanson	G 1062-3	B 360-362 @	8/3
Jardin Nocturne, Prison	G x 205	B 312	5/9
Au Cimetière, En Sourdine	G 886		8/3
Nocturne, op. 63		B 382	8/3
Le Parfum Impérissable		B 171	4/-

W.H.M.

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